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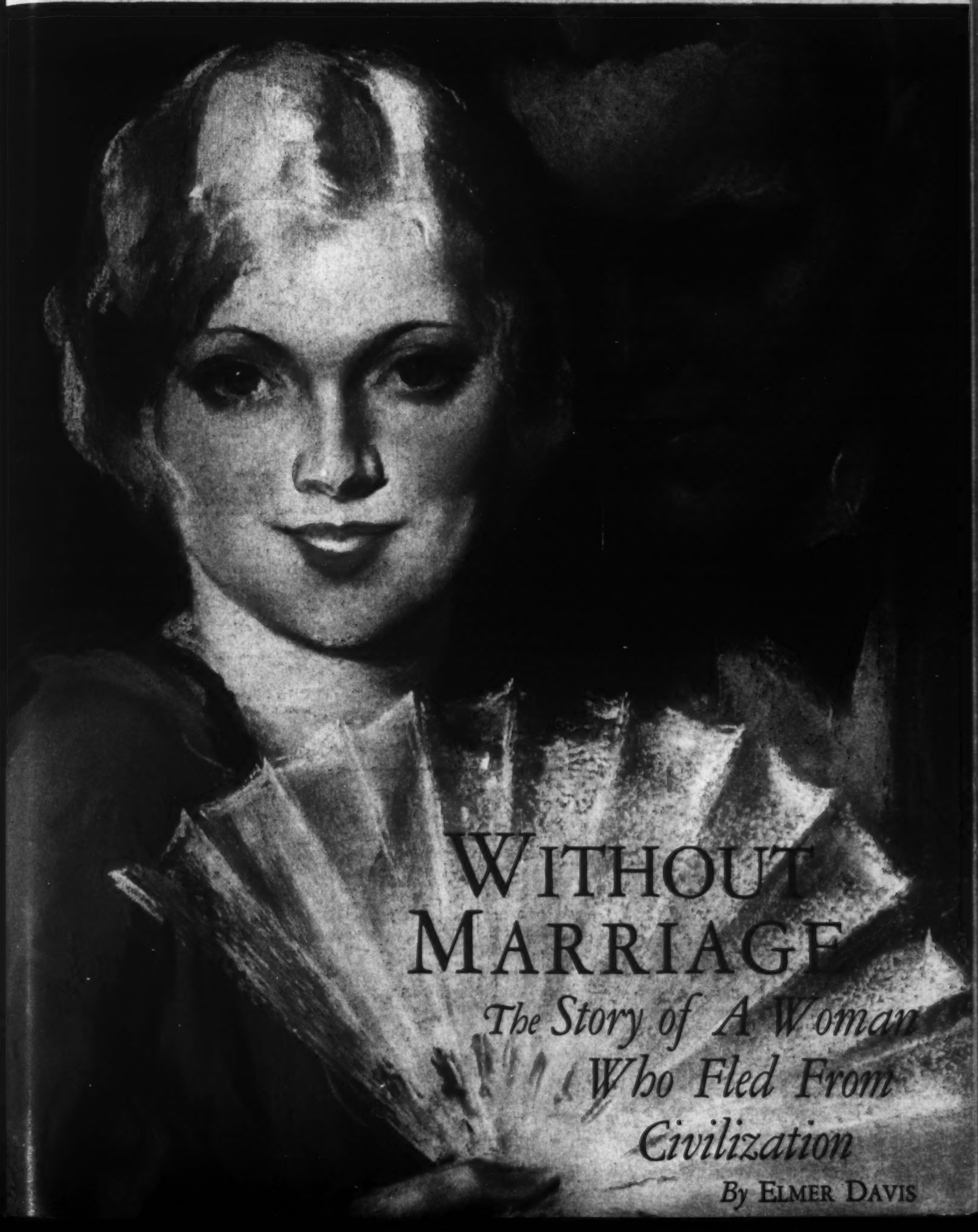
December THE MAGAZINE OF ROMANCE 25 Cents



WITHOUT MARRIAGE

The Story of A Woman Who Fled From Civilization

By ELMER DAVIS

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WHAT HAS HAPPENED? *Her lovely evening spoiled by one ugly fact. One fact — but it kept her lips glumly tight while others smiled, chattered, were happy. And they, of course, misunderstood.*

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* * * * * * * *

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* * * * * * * *

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Vol. 57

McCLURE'S

No. 6

THE MAGAZINE OF ROMANCE

Arthur McKeogh, *Editor*

December

CONTENTS

1926

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Cover Design by Guy Hoff

Serials

Page

by ***Elmer Davis*** in two parts — WITHOUT MARRIAGE 10

—with drawing by George Van Werveke and photographic backgrounds courtesy of First National Pictures, Inc.

by ***Warwick Deeping*** in six parts — THE NEW EVE 36

— with drawing by Arthur Litle and photographic background courtesy of Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer

Short Stories

by ***Walton Green*** *—with drawings by Harold Lund* — THE MOLE 15

by ***Oscar Graeve*** — LOVE IN FORTY-EIGHTH STREET 20

—with drawing by F. Delevante and photograph courtesy of International News Reel

by ***Grace Perkins Oursler*** *—with drawings by Vera Clere* — BORROWED CLOTHES 24

by ***Maurice Marks*** *—with drawings by Arthur Litle* — HAM AND YEGGS 27

by ***Paul Gray*** *—with drawing by Harold Lund and photographic exteriors courtesy of Famous Players* — A. W. O. L. 32

by ***Mary Louise Anawalt*** — GOLD DIGGING MOMMA 44

—with drawing by Eldon Kelley and photographs courtesy of Famous Players and Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer

by ***Dorothy Miller*** — THE TAXI GIRL AND THE ORANGES 48

—with drawing by Robert Orr

by ***Rayner Seelig*** *—with drawing by F. Delevante* — NOT WORTH MURDER 51

and photographs courtesy of International News Reel and Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer

by ***Katherine Hill*** *—with drawing by Joseph Golinkin* — SHE MARRIED A YACHT 58

and photographs courtesy Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer and First National Pictures, Inc.

by ***Margaret Ryder*** *—with drawing by J. H. Fyfe* — A SYNTHETIC CINDERELLA 62

by ***Percy Marks*** *—with drawings by Johan Bull* — PEACOCK FEATHERS 68

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Contents — Continued

Features

by ***Themselves***	*—with a photograph of John Held, Jr. by Underwood & Underwood*	"AUTHOR! AUTHOR!"	6
by ***Berton Braley and Arthur William Brown***		VAMP TILL READY	9
by ***Bruce Gould***	*—with drawings by Eldon Kelley*	WHERE NEW YORK GETS IT	18
by ***Lella Warren***	*—with drawings by Charles Mulholland*	EVERY TOWN'S A SMALL TOWN	30
by ***Wallace Irwin***	*—with drawings by August Henkel*	A LONG LIFE AND A SCRAPPY ONE	42
by ***John Held, Jr.,***		HER DAILY HALF DOZEN	56
by ***Marceline d'Alroy***	*—with drawings by Robert Orr*	DIARY OF A LITTLE FRENCH GIRL	66

Next Month

COME-HITHER STUFF

The Story of a Reckless Aviator and the Girl He Left Behind Him

By

Elliott White Springs

one of the authentic characters in the forth-coming book

WAR BIRDS

McClure's, *Published Monthly by the* INTERNATIONAL PUBLICATIONS INC., *at 119 West 40th Street, New York, N. Y.*

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The AUTHOR! AUTHOR! Page

My Most Romantic Christmas

As Told by McCLURE'S Authors for December

Margaret Ryder, who lives in Chicago, is the author of *A Synthetic Cinderella.* Her most romantic Christmas, she says, was her seventeenth. "Granted permission to bring four girls home from school with me," she relates, "my added social duties—or something—weighed heavily upon me, rendering me temporarily non compos mentis. Maybe I got used to saying yes in answer to so many telephone calls. Anyway I said it to the young chap next door; a few hours later I said it to his brother—I really was very busy. I had not fully taken in their conversations over the telephone, and Christmas Day found me, to my horror, engaged to both! Lovely! Toward evening, by common impulse, they sauntered over, each very casually, to acquaint my father of the glad tidings. I held my breath when the first eluded me and went into dad's library; when the second escaped me I died a little. And then my unnatural parent's laugh brayed out and his powerful voice announced, "Gad! She must have had a field day!" Well—I was completely un-engaged even more suddenly than I had become engaged. But with those four girls in the house I went back to school with a reputation as a heart-smasher that I've never been able to live up to!"

Bruce Gould tells *Where New York Gets It.* His most romantic Christmas happened during the War, when as a Naval Aviator he was left high and dry at Key West. He says: "We couldn't fly because all the planes were in the hangars. The weather wasn't even right; the island has never seen snow. Bored, we were grousing as we walked desultorily into the mess hall for noon chow, and—before our eyes was spread the most amazing feast ever devised. Here was a real Christmas angel, that navy cook!"

Elmer Davis insists that he can't remember having spent any particular romantic Christmas. "Romance," he says, "in dealing with me, seems to have pretty well skipped the month of December. Not that I have been what you would call a Barrymore in any month." Mr. Davis is the author of *Without Marriage.*

Walton Green's first fiction story *The Mole* appears in this month's McClure's. He was formerly head of the Division of Investigation of the Federal Prohibition Bureau in Washington, D. C. He says: "My most romantic Christmas was spent in Arizona in 1910 when I got drunk and ran a shipment of rifles across the border to the Maderistos."

Mary Louise Anawalt, author of *Gold Digging Momma,* writes from Uniontown, the heart of the Pennsylvania mining district: "One of the most colorful years of my life was spent at a coke plant in process of construction. That Christmas was one of sounds that I shall never forget—the slithering fiddle bows of the Gypsy musicians, louder and louder the Ya! Ya! Ya! of the dancers accompanied by the steady thump of heavy shoes. Crack! The bark of a gun. Again crack—once, twice—and a woman's wail of anguish. Another murder in the Patch! And in a house on the hill, a little girl, sitting safe and warm under a gay Christmas tree, raised frightened eyes from her very first fairy tale book to listen . . . I was the little girl—and I still have that book of fairy tales."

John Held, Jr., with three of his chickens—two of which are Leghorns.

Paul Gray says: "Always the American flag has drawn me like a magnet. I have followed it in the infantry, artillery, army recruiting service and the marine corps." His story *A.W.O.L.* in this month's McClure's is about the marines. His most romantic Christmas was in 1915. "Through a set of fortuitous circumstances," says Mr. Gray, "I found myself in Mexico City enjoying a fabulous salary, in gold, when exchange was twenty to one. Old Scrooge was never more thrilled over his 'Merry Christmas' than was I upon strolling the length of the Alameda on Christmas morning and dealing out paper bank-notes to the ragged, hungry peons of revolution torn Mexico."

Grace Perkins Oursler who is responsible for *Borrowed Clothes* says last Christmas was her most romantic. Mrs. Oursler says: "My husband and I had just returned to New York from our honeymoon, and had spent three bitter, blowy, snowy weeks clawing through the scrap-heap of real estate offerings in search of our first family hearth. We didn't find the hearth exactly, but on Christmas Eve we found an apartment and signed the option as a Christmas present to our future."

John Held, Jr., is the boy who makes Christmas romantic for many people. Out on his farm in Connecticut he raises chickens and turkeys between intervals of drawing *That McClure Girl.* And what is Christmas without a turkey?

Dorothy Miller, whose story is *The Taxi Girl and the Oranges,* says: "Christmas to me means picking pinfeathers from an extravagance nobody regrets, walking through tissue paper as one scuffs through autumn leaves, and being so generally frivolous that even the drumstick tastes good!"

Lella Warren, who contributes *Every Town's a Small Town,* appears for the first time in any magazine. She says: "My most romantic Christmasses were those when I was still young enough to pop the button off my waistband from eating too much stuffing out of the turkey."

Maurice Marks' story this month is *Ham and Yeggs* and is as full of chuckles as the fattest, jolliest sort of Santa Claus. He says: "Here's to McClure's as long as there's a December 25th on the calendars. The most romantic Christmas I ever spent is always the last one."

Oscar Graeve, who writes *Love in Forty-Eighth Street,* remembers his first Christmas spent in Greenwich Village as his most romantic. He says: "I was living in a studio in a back yard heated only by a vague stove. But what did that matter? I was young."

Katherine Hill is the author of *She Married a Yacht.* Here's her most romantic Christmas: "It was spent alone in a hall bedroom in Greenwich Village. I had moved in the day before and was too tired to go out shopping for food—even if I'd had the money, which I hadn't. I had carefully cached two eggs in an outside window icebox in anticipation of a holiday banquet. When dinner-time came the eggs were frozen! I remember their extraordinary taste still . . . But I was twenty-three, on my own in New York for the first time, and the next morning there was a fifty dollar check in the mail."

Vamp Till Ready

Drawing by
ARTHUR
WILLIAM
BROWN

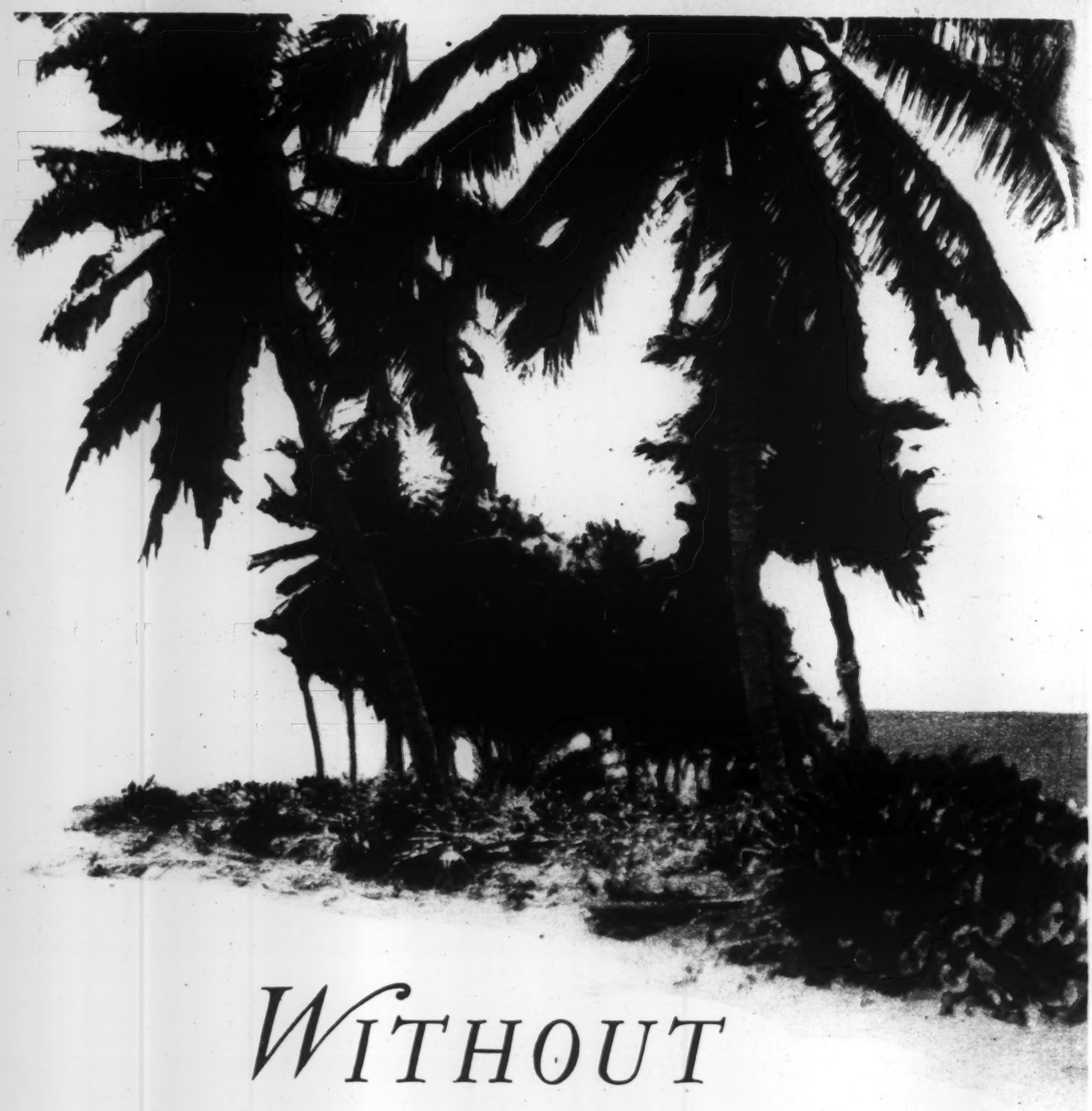
By
BERTON BRALEY

SOME people say that I'm a vamp
And that I spend my whole existence
Slanting a gay and festive lamp
At every male in hailing distance.
Maybe in part it's true enough,
I seem to have some slight appeal,
Yet all the time I do my stuff
I'm really seeking my Ideal!

He must be an aristocrat
Knowing his oats, wise-cracking, witty,
But not too ritzy or high-hat.
He ought to shake a hoof that's pretty.
He should love music, books and art,
His taste in clothes should be real choicey,
I want him handsome, brilliant, smart,
Distingue, wealthy and rolls-roycey.

He must have pep and savoir-faire,
With ease and charm that can't get past one;
He ought to have a worldly air
And spring a line that is a fast one.

OH NO, I haven't seen him yet,
This hero of my dream romances,
But till that prince and I have met
I am not missing any chances.
For Bill or Clarence, Fred or Pete
May prove the lad for whom I'm sighing,
And if I vamp each man I meet
It's just because I *must* keep trying!



WITHOUT MARRIAGE

The Story of a Man and Woman who Learned that LOVE is the Most Binding of All Laws

OVER a gap in the matted mangroves of the island shore, the fronds of a cocoa palm rasped softly in the tepid breeze of dawn. Across the sea of dusky blue, the milky green of inshore shallows, tiny waves rippled languidly to expire in a bubbling hiss on the strip of drift-strewn sand. Nearby, a man bronzed by the sun and garbed only in torn bathing trunks stood staring out across the water. A hundred feet out a dead sailfish drifted on the ebbing tide; and beyond——

Black against the sunrise, a three-cornered fin cut the blue water, driving toward the drifting carcass. The man stooped swiftly and picked a long knife off the sand; corded muscles rippled under his velvety bronze skin as he strode out through the shallows and plunged headlong,

By
ELMER
DAVIS

The man stooped swiftly and picked up a long knife off the sand.

swimming silently, his open eyes staring down at the weedy rock of the coral bottom.

He glanced up; the fin had passed the carcass, it was drawing near. His elastic lungs drew in a prodigious draft of air; he dove again, arched upward, and waited, open-eyed, in the translucent green water.

A sweeping shadow dimmed the light; a white belly took shape before him as the shark rolled over; a cavern of serried teeth yawned wide. He struck, swift and hard; legs apart, he braced himself as the knife, stiletto-pointed, thrust deep into the leathery belly—braced himself and held while the shark's impetus drove it on and the razor-edged blade ripped the belly open as a paper knife slits an envelope. A crimson cloud darkened the luminous

green water as the man came to the surface and gulped a mouthful of air.

Far away, another fin was dark against the eastern flame; but it was still far distant. The man swam inshore; at the water's edge, he slipped on a pair of rope sandals and wiped his knife on a bunch of grass; he spoke, with the unconsciousness of one so used to solitude that he has lost sight of the boundary between thought and speech.

"One more shark—and one more day . . . Hell!"

SWIFTLY he trotted inland, up a path hacked through the tangle of sea grapes and the dogwood thickets beyond, hardly feeling the young shoots that whipped his shins, the hanging twigs that lashed his body. The thickets opened on a natural clearing where tall coarse grass grew out of the white coral sand, and a dozen cocoanut palms lifted their plumage above a gray unpainted house, with a chimney of white coral rock, a low-sweeping roof of weatherworn shingles.

A poor enough house; a mere shack on an out-of-the-way Florida Key; but it suited Glenn Mercer a good deal better than the thirty-thousand-dollar Dutch Colonial villa in Standish Manor, Westchester County, New York, where he had spent what ought to have been the best ten years of his life.

It was at least a shack with conveniences, possessing a wide screened porch; a rude bathroom where he stood under the shower, washing the brine from his brown skin and his mop of dark hair; a kitchen where, in the bathing trunks that he wore all day except when bathing, he set about getting breakfast on a kerosene stove.

Eighteen months ago, he mused over his after-breakfast cigaret, he had never cooked a meal in his life; nor done much else except audit other men's books in his profession of certified public accountant. And perhaps the one real danger he had survived in his reversion to the primitive had been his own cooking in those first months on the island. It must have been more perilous even than the sharks.

The sharks had been bad enough at first—despite the training he had got from a native—when his eye had not yet been schooled to lightning quickness, wrist and arm not yet endowed with the steely strength that made his stroke swift and sure; when he went to the beach every morning and flung out his dead fish, wildly hoping that the bait would fail to attract anything, his heart pounding with relief when no fin cut the sea, his stomach turning in sickening terror when a shark was waiting and he must go through his self-imposed ordeal.

But now the hazard was gone; physical hazard and moral hazard too. By sheer inflexible insistence, by driving himself to fight a shark when a shark could be found, by dogged refusal to let himself eat breakfast till he had undergone his daily trial, he had made it a habit at last. For months, now, he had felt no fear. Indeed all the hazards and hardships of those early days were gone, when he beat the thickets of his island, driving out and killing the snakes, when he labored with pick and spade in the rocky soil, draining the pools that bred mosquitos. Now everything was easy—perhaps too easy.

He rose jerkily, spiritual *malaise* overriding even his perfect physical condition. Doggedly he burned his paper dishes, washed his cooking utensils. Work—he needed work this morning; grubby, sweating work. But all the grubby work had been done in those first months of trying to forget.

Brain work, then . . . The house was one long room, bare-walled, its few pieces of shabby furniture scattered like islands in the sea. By the farther window stood a typewriter desk; he opened a drawer and stared at a bulky mass of typescript headed "Prosperity and Inflation."

Prosperity and Inflation—the great work . . . It had saved his life. Less than two years ago, it had seemed so desperately urgent that he dared not die until he had left this message for posterity. But the tropics discouraged urgency. The great work was still unfinished; it was weeks since he had touched it at all. Even this morning, restless and at a loss, he shut the drawer with a slam. Not today.

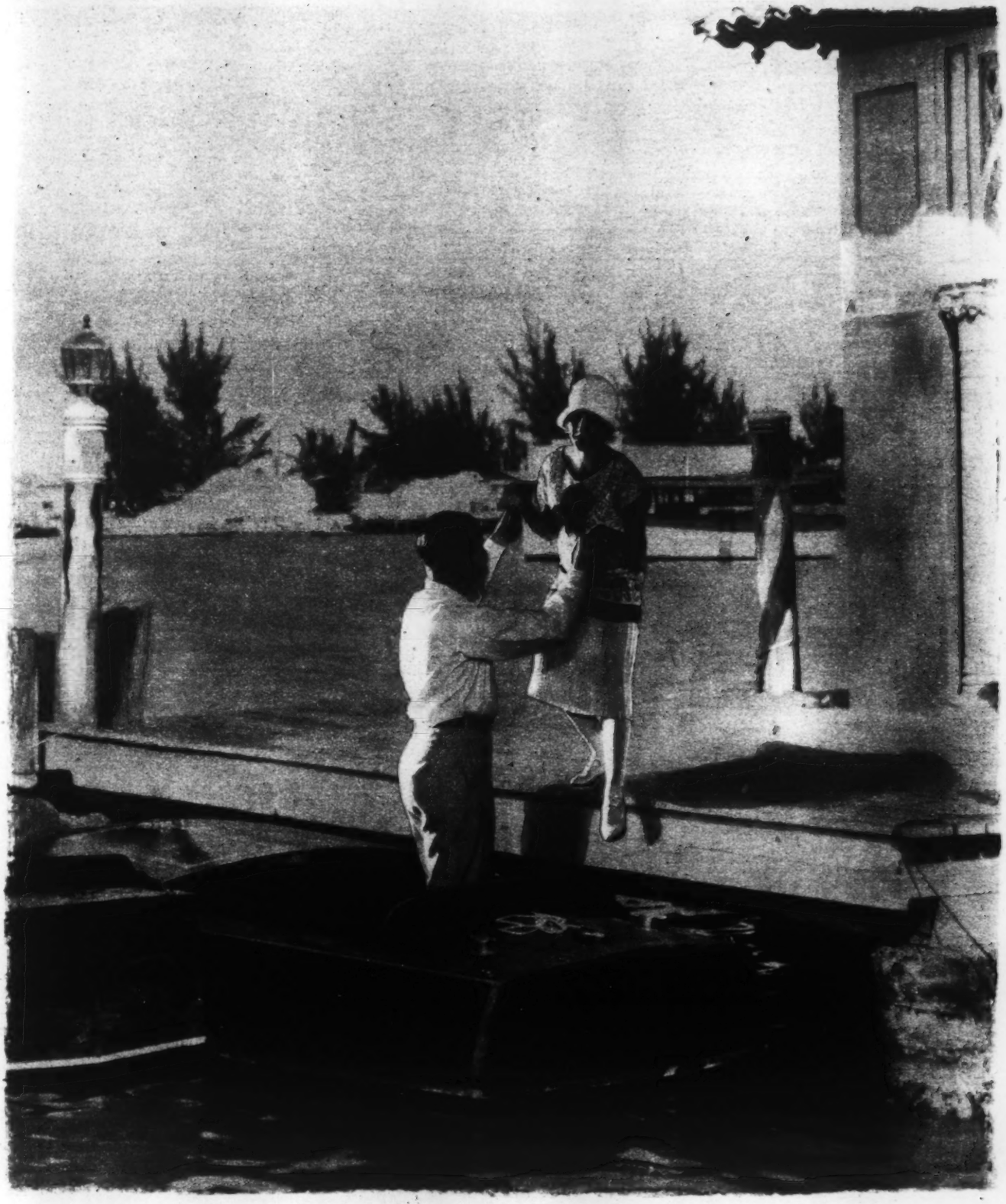
He mixed a rickey—gin from the kitchen cupboard, cool rain-water from the cistern, a lime plucked from one of the gray trees beyond the clearing—and sipped it slowly in his wicker rocker, his ears perfunctorily recording the ceaseless wash of low surf on the beach, the soft rustle of palms overhead. Were the tropics getting him at last? Or was something else getting him?

He was bored; he wanted to hear a human voice, if only the lazy drawl of a Key West storekeeper, selling him groceries or kerosene. No need to go to town; the pantry was still well stocked. But he could see a movie. He could call at the post-office and get the magazines that kept him posted on what the world was doing—or had been doing a month ago. He could——

Yes. The calendar where he methodically crossed off the days told him that it was Saturday, the tenth of February. Saturday. On Monday, Wednesday and Friday the evening train brought to Key West a swarm of tourists. They spent the night at the Casa Marina, the great hotel on the beach, and then took the morning boat to Havana. In that crowd, he might always encounter some one who knew him.

But on other days the hotel was all but empty; on Saturday, he could count on forty-eight hours of quiet. He wanted to hear human voices, but unfamiliar voices which he could escape at will. And it would be a welcome change to sleep between sheets and eat meals he hadn't cooked himself; still more welcome to return after two days of civilization to his lonely island.

SHE was smoking—her knees crossed; decorative knees, he noticed, shapely and silken.



It was mid-afternoon before they embarked. They were in no hurry now, thoroughly enjoying the light affectionate gaiety of a honeymoon.

He dressed himself in soft gray flannels, still smart though their cut was two years old; the cracked full-length mirror in his wardrobe door told him that with his bronze body clothed he looked like any tourist. He packed his buff leather bag, and hesitated, frowning . . . Key West only? There was an edge on his restlessness, a recurrent familiar itch. Five hours by train to Miami, seven hours by boat to Havana, and he could find noisy gaiety, women with questing eyes who might cure his discontent.

But they couldn't. He knew, for he had tried. A foolish fastidiousness, perhaps, in a man who had deliberately gone primitive; but so he felt and it would be more foolish still to deny it. Besides, in Miami or Havana he would surely meet some one who knew him. Some day he must face that, but not yet.

He strode out, slamming his screen door; no need of locks on an island where no foot but his ever trod. Another path through the thickets brought him to a cove and a dock, and a huge signboard:

FORGOTTEN KEY
PRIVATE PROPERTY
TRESPASSERS KEEP OFF

Superfluous warning; no trespasser had ever come near enough to read it.

THE island rose before them, spread out on either hand. Ghostly, silent, a great crane flew above them.

Drawing by George Van Werveke

In his dingy broad-beamed launch he chug-chugged down the blue-water channel through the offshore reef, into the open sea where a chain of dark low islands lay dim on the southern horizon.

THE gray town drowsed in hot afternoon, yet as he went from store to store replenishing his supplies he saw signs of the times: a new hotel, more automobiles, ancient buildings whose windows bore the fresh-painted signs of realtors. Seepage from the boom that had swept continental Florida like a tidal wave; presently the flood would follow, drowning this repose. But not yet.

Tropic languor still overhung the sleepy streets; at the edge of town the hotel, white-walled, red-roofed, lay silent by the blue-green sea. He walked through a deserted lobby to the desk, and registered from Forgotten Key, Florida, with a pride that Glenn Mercer of Standish Manor, New York, had never known.

Presently, fresh-barbered, smartly clad, a civilized man in place of the naked brown savage of the morning, he wandered in the stillness, idly content with the glare of sunlight on white walls, the green relief of hedge and lawn. Here were human beings who could be seen and need not be heard; one or two women drowsing over novels on the sunlit porch, one or two old gentlemen smoking under striped umbrellas on the lawn, a child playing silently among the sprouting palms. No need to speak to them, no occasion to listen to them; but their mere presence eased his unrest.

An hour till dinner. Well, a cigar, a newspaper— He drifted to the news-stand. Another customer had the clerk's attention, a white-clad woman, buying cigarets; as he waited, he found himself disinterestedly pleased with her symmetrically shingled hair, shading from pale gold to honey color. Briskly she turned away, and he felt a deep and quaking shiver, a shock that toppled his insecure content, as her casual, blue-eyed glance crossed his.

"Something you wanted?" the news-stand girl was asking.

"Oh!" He regarded her abstractly. "Have you a New York Times? All gone? A Miami Herald, then? Oh, well, never mind. It doesn't matter."

He turned with a pretense of indifference; half way down the lobby the woman in white had paused, glancing back. In the instant before she went on he read in her face what he knew she read in his, a puzzled disquieting conviction that somewhere they had known each other.

Slowly he followed her, uneasy, distrait, a whole day's striving toward inner peace undone by this chance encounter. He didn't mean to speak to her; it had been two years since he had spoken to a woman like her, and if indeed she knew him she probably wouldn't speak to him. Yet he had to still the itch of alert distrustful curiosity, the blind groping for a name to fit the face.

She was smoking in a rocker on the porch, her knees crossed—decorative knees, shapely and silken, he noticed with obscure irritation. Her poise, her unconcerned indifference to his frank stare, to all that went on around her, would have been magnificent but for the merest hint of sullen defiance. And she smoked as few women smoke even yet, with the un-selfconscious automatism of a man.

Why, of course! That placed her—and placed her, to his chilled astonishment, in Standish Manor. Forgotten unwelcome memories swarmed back; the 6:22 train pulling up at the station, disgorging commuters into the falling snow; automobile doors slamming; a fur-coated woman smoking with absent-minded ease at the wheel of her car as her husband climbed in beside her . . . Dance music in the club on a spring night; a row of cars parked outside; two cigarets glowing, the momentary glimmer of a street lamp on golden hair in the darkness of a sedan. Not her husband's car, this time; Marty Paine's car, Marty Paine the villager bachelor and squire of dames . . . Her slim finger flicking the ash from her cigaret as she stood beside him, Glenn Mercer, in the club lounge, talking perfunctorily after a dance. At one of the big monthly assemblies, it must have been; for even yet he groped for her name.

Mrs.—Mrs. Blanchard. That was it—Mrs. Carl Blanchard; Hilda Blanchard. Her husband was a soggy-faced lawyer; they lived in Austen Street. For years Mercer had barely known them; a nod to her husband on the 8:37 every morning, a dance with her at the club three or four times a year; her name on the guest list at his wife's annual musicale.

It amazed him that he could recall that old life in such detail, when for eighteen months he had thrust it out of mind while he painstakingly built up a wholly new Glenn Mercer.

But now the old life had caught up with the new man, as he had known that some day it must. She hadn't spoken to him; so far, she could pretend [*Continued on page 74*]

The MOLE

By WALTON GREEN

They were twin sisters, —one innocent, the other guilty. But *which* was HIS PROMISED WIFE?

AT ABOUT eight-thirty o'clock of a March evening in nineteen hundred and seventeen, in the city of Baltimore, young Dr. Kenneth Boyden returned to his office. He had walked all the way from the hospital, carrying his heavy instrument bag, because he could not afford unnecessary taxicabs. His office, which consisted of two rooms and a bath, was also his home. He slept on a couch in the patient's waiting room.

Dr. Boyden entered the hallway, pushed open the door of his waiting room, and switched on the light. Then he stood quite still.

Kenneth Boyden was a very large young man physically and a very imperturbable one mentally. When he did not quite know what to do, he made it a rule to do nothing. So now he stood still.

Across the room a man sat under the reading light. In the man's left hand was an open magazine which he had been reading. His right arm rested on the table beside him and his hand was clasped with careless readiness about the butt of a revolver. The upper part of the man's face was covered with a molded black cloth mask.

THE right hand of the masked man was clasped with careless readiness about the butt of a revolver.

Having, as he thought, sized up the situation, Dr. Boyden began to laugh. He had a sense of the comic —when it was sufficiently obvious; also he was cultivating a hearty bedside laugh as part of his professional equipment.

"I'm grateful for the compliment, but I'm afraid the joke's on you. I walked home because I didn't have enough money for a taxi. But I'm not arguing with that artillery of yours, so go ahead and search me. May I set down my bag without drawing the enemies' fire?"

"Yes," answered the man quietly, "and please close the door."

The doctor turned to obey. He swung the door to and found himself facing another man who had been standing behind it. The second man also wore a black cloth mask and also held a revolver in his hand. Slightly disconcerted, but clinging loyally to his code, the doctor continued to smile.

"This is either more serious or less serious than simple robbery. Will one of you gentlemen please say something?"

The man in the chair rose, but did not remove his hand from the pistol on the table. He spoke in a slow purposeful voice and seemed to choose his words with care.

"My brother and I have come to take you with us on a professional case. You will be well paid, and will be returned safely to this room tomorrow provided you make no resistance. But you must submit to being blindfolded from the moment you leave this house until you return, except while you are actually operating."

"One moment," interrupted the doctor, on the verge of losing his temper. "Is there anything criminal about these professional services?"

"Certainly not," answered the first mask.

"Then why all this theatrical blindfolding? I'm from Virginia. If I give you my word of honor to divulge no professional secrets why can't I go along with my eyes open?"

The two masks looked at one another in consideration. Finally the first one spoke, hurriedly and with evident emotion.

"We are sorry, sir, but it is impossible. We do not question your word, but we do not wish you to know where you go or to whom you give aid. We can take no chances. You may understand later. But you must come, and you must come at once. We have a long way to go. Now turn your back while my brother blindfolds you. He will give you as little discomfort as possible."

"Very well," said Boyden, his sense of the ludicrous rising again, "if it's as bad as all that I'll make your minds easy by promising not even to try to see where we're going. So put up your damned guns and I'll come along peaceably."

Drawings by Harold Lund

"Thank you, sir—thank you," said the first mask earnestly. "That assurance we gladly accept. Will you please, then, adjust your own blind." He handed the doctor a silken muffler. "My brother will carry your bag, and I will lead you."

They left the house, and entered a closed car, the shades of which had been drawn. The second man, who had spoken no word throughout, took the driver's seat outside.

The car passed rapidly out of Baltimore and into open country. Dr. Boyden knew they were on a main highway because of the even pace they maintained. But he had no idea whether they were headed towards Washington or Philadelphia. That they were going very fast, he judged by the quick, whipping roar of passing cars. He idly tried to guage the speed by timing the distance between telegraph poles, but found that the echo did not flash back from the posts as it does when one is on a railroad train. Dr. Boyden was a keen observer.

Furthermore, having once committed himself to the adventure, Dr. Boyden was determined to make the best of it. The best of it, since his companion would not talk, seemed to consist of an occasional cigaret which was considerately lighted and handed to him.

The journey dragged on. Now and again the doctor dozed. How long it lasted, he never knew. With the city dweller's slavish dependence on time pieces which meet the eye at every hand, he had neither instinct nor practice in measuring time without mechanical assistance. The trip might have lasted an hour, or it might have been three; nearer the latter he thought.

But finally the car slowed down, took a sharp curve, and came to a halt. They got out.

"We shall have to walk a little way," said the first brother. "If you will take my arm, my brother will carry your bag again."

They proceeded for perhaps a hundred yards on a gravel driveway. Then they ascended a flight of steps, a door was unlocked, and the doctor felt the warm rush of house air. He was divested of his overcoat. The brothers whispered together and the second one moved away. The doctor could hear the soft impact of his footfalls as he mounted a carpeted stairway, then the gradually receding sound of his steps in an upper hallway.

Presently he returned. He was breathing rather quickly.

"Come at once please!" He lifted the bag and started ahead.

Dr. Boyden was led up the carpeted stairway and along the upper hall. Excitement again awoke in him his instinct for observing. Out of sheer curiosity, and with no thought of using the knowledge, he counted twenty-three treads on the stairway; he counted his steps in the upper hallway. They turned several corners. It seemed a very long hallway in a very large house. They stopped, and one brother advanced a few paces and gently opened a door. The doctor heard him call softly into the room.

"All right, you may come out now—the doctor's here." Then the swish of skirts as some servant left the room and passed in the dark, and Boyden was led forward again.

"This is the room, doctor," whispered the first brother. "It is in a remote wing of the house, and you won't be disturbed. Here is your bag. My brother and I will be just outside this door. If you need anything call us."

The handkerchief was removed and Dr. Boyden entered the room. It was a large room, furnished with the cumbrous furniture of the 'seventies. Against the left hand wall stood a black walnut bed, and in the bed lay the figure of a girl. The girl was blindfolded with a silk muffler which covered the entire upper part of her head even to her hair; only the mouth and nostrils were exposed. The doctor walked over to the bed and let his appraising glance linger for a moment on the occupant. Then he went to work.

THREE hours later Dr. Boyden was blindfolded again and led downstairs. He was very tired and a little shaky. The brothers seated him at a table and offered him whiskey and black coffee. He drank the coffee and smoked a cigaret.

"Well gentlemen, everything is splendid—both of them. Nothing further to worry about unless something very unforeseen develops."

Dr. Boyden was driven back to Baltimore and left at his door. It was now broad daylight. He entered his consulting room, and tore open the envelope which had been slipped into his hand on the way back. He thumbed over the orange-tinted bills and whistled.

Opposite his fiancée sat another girl, obviously her twin.

"Hmm," he murmured to himself. "I'd like to be kidnapped like that every night." Dr. Boyden was young and the tragedies of other lives still left him cold.

ALL this occurred, as has been said, on a March night in nineteen hundred and seventeen. A few weeks later America was at war and Kenneth Boyden was on his way to France with one of the first medical units.

Now this is not a war romance. No reader need fear a glowing account of how the young doc, armed only with a naked stethoscope, subdued a machine gun nest, saved the battalion and received the Congressional Medal. This is neither a romance nor a war story. It is a circumstantial recital of some incidents in the life of Kenneth Boyden, M. D.

The war years were pretty nearly a dead loss to Kenneth. He was a cold-blooded and brilliant young surgeon; he didn't have a knife in his hands all the time he was in France. Since he was preeminently fitted for a front-line operating team, he was promptly assigned to a convalescent hospital at Biarritz and put in charge of shell-shock cases. That was the Army.

Two months after the armistice, Ken had wheedled and fought his way back as far as Brest. Here he stuck for another three weeks in a camp which was cunningly constructed of mud and canvas. Then he squeezed aboard the *Rotterdam,* washed himself all over in a porcelain bath tub and sat down to gloom.

He felt that he would have helped his country just as much if he had gone to China and spent two years asleep. He had all the medical man's contempt for the bungling approximations of non-medical mankind. Your true doc sometimes compromises with the outside world, but he never trusts it. Most doctors are profound skeptics. And all great surgeons are artists — narrow-minded, selfish and splendidly capricious in their imaginative processes. Being almost entirely occupied by the physical side of life and death, they know very little about every-day living and dying.

Now Kenneth Boyden had all the makings of a great surgeon. His physical endowment was superb. For the rest, he was professionally selfish and scientifically merciless. He knew nothing about himself, his faculty of observation being wholly objective. He could learn more about a patient in one week than he would know about himself in his whole life.

He had a few rough and ready rules of personal conduct, such as his pose of defensive imperturbability, which he had deliberately adopted, and the hearty laugh which was partly innate and partly practiced. His own life he had calculated to a nicety. He would work like the very devil, touch neither alcohol, nor women, nor marriage until ten years out of the medical school. He was consecrated, he told himself in all sincerity, to the art of the knife.

All this being true, it follows naturally and inevitably that seventy-two hours after boarding the *Rotterdam* Kenneth Boyden should fall hopelessly and insanely, boyishly and inanely, finally and completely in love.

This is not a romance, so the girl doesn't matter. In a love story it would be necessary to explain that she was slim and dark-haired and lustrous-eyed (which she was); that she spoke with a deliciously soft Baltimore drawl tempered in a Northern boarding-school; carried herself with the sinuous, weaving grace of the bodily unbound modern girl (which she did); and that she had a merry, elusive smile of utter charm (which she had).

But in a sober chronicle of fact it is enough to recite that to the authorities of Base Hospital No. 52, Miss Mary Fairman of Baltimore was known as a reasonably dependable young nurse who did her work acceptably and did not flirt too much with the homesick doctors and wounded officers, but devoted herself quite whole

[*Continued on page 81*]

Ken's manner toward her was so strange that even Mrs. Fairman noticed it.

Where New York

By
BRUCE GOULD

The Newest of the City's 15,000 Speak-easies: the Apartment Saloon, the Key Club, the Tea Room Jolt Shop

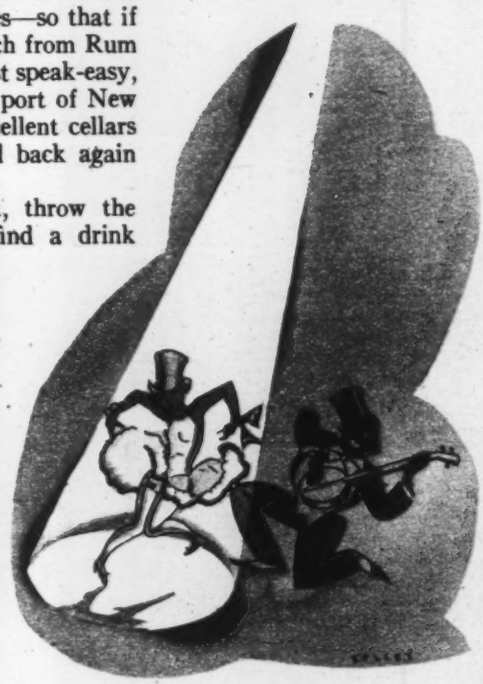
The clink of ice in frosted glasses sounds in Greenwich Village.

THE first hundred years of Prohibition will be the wettest. After that Sahara—or the Deluge.

New York City has been called the worst offender against the Volstead Act. Congressmen, between drinks in the cloakroom, solemnly rise to denounce the Broadway oasis. New York is wet. The first to knock the chip off the shoulder of the Anti-Saloon League, New York has always been a step or two ahead of other cities in its method of getting a drink. The key club, the tea room jolt shop, the apartment saloon, are some of the town's latest substitutes for the pre-Volstead bar. In fact New York holds enough liquor to pickle the entire population of 7,000,000 Gothamites—so that if laid head to foot they would stretch from Rum Row to San Francisco's westernmost speak-easy, south through the absinthe-loving port of New Orleans, northeast through the excellent cellars of the Washington embassies, and back again to Broadway's night clubs.

Stand anywhere in New York, throw the proverbial stone, and you will find a drink somewhere within the radius of your throw. Even if thrown from a ferryboat, the stone probably would strike a cocktail on a private yacht.

With New York patrolled by thousands of policemen, gumshoed by scores of Prohibition agents, its highways guarded by state police, its water-ways protected by coast guards and Customs' officers, how does New York get its liquor? Much of it comes from—diverted industrial alcohol. Rum Row is not very active these days—although still in operation—but practically every ship enters New York with several cases of liquor smuggled in by members of the crew anxious to turn a dishonest dollar. Thousands of cases of whiskey come in over the Canadian border. Rum-runners in high-powered motor-cars, whose cushions and chassis conceal caches for liquor, make the four hundred mile trip two and three times a week. It would be impossible to stop all the cars which operate along the border. And a bootlegger's auto galleon looks like the innocent tourist's car even to skeptical eyes.



Harlem is one of the centers of after-midnight activity.

But, once gotten, how does New York dispense drinks to its customers? That is what Cousin Henry or Uncle John wants to know when he comes to Gotham on his annual business trip. What his business is, is nobody's business, back home—though he intends that L'il Ol' N'Yawk shall sense his lusty presence. For it's just as safe to say that the pillars of the old home town are the financial supports of New York's night life today, as it was when the big date and fig men blew in from Smyrna in the Roman days to paint the Appian Way an electric red.

New York has systematized its drinking. Every class can get what it wants when it wants it. Along the shipping water-front and in the poorer districts, you will find a few saloons left, where beer is still obtainable at twenty-five cents a glass. Some of it is pretty poor stuff, a kickless substitute "needled." Just before a barrel is opened, the proprietor gives it a "kick" by injecting a shot of ether into the keg. Others supply a good grade of beer from favored breweries for their regular customers. Setting the glass on the bar, they place an empty near beer bottle alongside, as a left-handed genuflection to the Great God Bunk.

FOR the business men, there's the "key club." Located in an office building, this is usually one or two rooms fitted up with a semi-bar where Scotch, rye, and gin rickeys may be obtained at from fifty to seventy-five cents a drink. Each member has a card of admission, or a key to the lock in the door. Business is confined generally to the working hours of the day. But bottled liquor can be purchased for home consumption at the reigning price.

In Wall Street, the key club may be more elaborate. Comfortable wicker furniture outfits the inner room, which is screened by a strictly business-looking office where sits a stenographer pecking at a typewriter, engaged for her histrionic rather than her business qualities. The password may be anything as simple as, "I want to see the Vice-President, Mr. Endicott." There may even be a ticker and a board in the Wall Street speak-easy. A broker buys and sells his day's stocks and bonds as he sips a high-ball, drinking to success or drowning his sorrows if the market drops on him.

Uptown, for the fair sex, there are the "tea rooms" where at the noon hour a "jolt" can be had, disguised as tea in a delicate china cup. Or, if you know the head

GETS It

Around you are faces from the rotogravure sections—society leaders, the upper crust.

Drawings by
Eldon Kelley

waiters at fashionable restaurants, you may be able to obtain a bright pink cocktail in a tall cool glass. Nor does wine in a cup look unlike black coffee, though it may seem to be quaffed with more solid enjoyment than is usually accorded a cup of Java.

New York's exclusive clubs, where sit Mr. Vanderpool and Mr. Astorbilt, have solved the Prohibition problem to the satisfaction of all members, so that reformer and imbiber can live in peace behind their stately Fifth Avenue windows. Few clubs any longer have a pre-Volstead bar. But the law-abiding club bar provides every ingredient for all the drinks except the kick. And every club has at least one or two reliable bootleggers as handy as the telephone or the messenger boy. The bartender will shake you up a Bronx or a Manhattan cocktail and give you a measuring cup indicating just how much you should pour out of your flask or bottle to make a smooth drink. The word locker at such clubs has become almost synonomous with cellaret. The club officially obeys the law but none of its members is any the dryer for it. Nevertheless, the respectable forms are observed. And so, when you read in the newspapers that some national Prohibition administrator is staying at one of New York's finest clubs, it gives only the initiated a smile and a chance to wonder whether he also has discovered the skeleton dangling in the exclusive closet.

Diners out, who must have a cocktail, wine, and a highball with their evening meal, find no difficulty after shopping around a bit in discovering a place where their needs can be taken care of. Seldom are such places apparent to the uninitiated, however. They are found in out-of-the-way streets, often in basements, and frequently in gardens behind somber-looking private dwellings. Patrons are restricted to well-recommended persons willing to suffer a slight inconvenience in order to enjoy a Continental dinner. Often, residents of the same block will remain unaware of the existence of such an inconspicuous restaurant. Even should they find it they would consider it only an obscure little dump, beneath notice. But to the diners it is Paris, Vienna, Budapest, Florence, or what you will. The darkened entrance leads into an attractive room where sit congenial people, drawn together by a common bond of thirst. The garden restaurants are cool in summer. Water streaming down the awning above the tables cools the air. Artists, authors, journalists, some of the more exacting business men dine at leisure there, and discuss everything but the Prohibition question—for that to them is no longer a serious problem.

It costs from twenty-five to one hundred dollars to leave a night club.

Major Chester P. Mills, the city's latest Prohibition administrator and a close friend of General Lincoln C. Andrews, estimates that there are fifteen thousand speak-easies in New York, and that he is powerless to close them. That conservative estimate means one speak-easy for every five hundred people: the equivalent of one saloon for every average rural village. Nor will there be any dearth of Christmas rum this season, for a sufficient quantity of specially denatured alcohol has been withdrawn to make enough beverage liquor for the holidays! This alcohol, which is illegally "renatured" and made potable, Major Mills states he cannot seize because it has been withdrawn on legitimate permits.

Beer is still obtainable at twenty-five cents a glass.

BUT the latest wrinkle evolved by New York in its struggle for a wet existence is the "apartment saloon." Not much later than yesterday it developed, in accord with the strict economic law of supply and demand. The rich man has his exclusive club, the poor man brews his own wine and concocts his own gin. There had to be some place where the vast middle-class could locate a drink and quaff it, without paying too high a price for the privilege and without worrying about the unannounced entry of the police.

The apartment saloon, as New York knows it, is the latest type of speak-easy. The vast majority of them are massed in that persistently parched area of Manhattan Island known as the Roarin' Forties to New Yorkers, and as the Great White Way to the nation at large. It isn't a key club. It has none of the aspects of the cabaret or night club. It doesn't come under the definition of a restaurant. It isn't a blind pig. Simply and briefly, it is some one's home. An apartment, it is fitted out and furnished like any of the thousands of others in New York. But it is operated with a difference.

You can get a drink there. You can sink into an overstuffed davenport while quenching your thirst. You can talk to the dozen or so other friends of the apartment owner who also like a drink. You can play the victrola over by the wall. You can amuse yourself with the radio on the console table, and get Honolulu if you're a wizard at the dials. You can play a game of cards, or read the newspaper at your elbow. In [*Continued on page 101*]

LOVE in

Even with a Crook—
She Found
It Paid
to Play the Game Square

She held Jack off. "No no, Jack! He don't know

SHE said that she was married and had a kid. This was true. She also said that her husband was an invalid and that she had taken the job in the Happiness Club because she had to support both her husband and the kid. This however, was not true Not entirely.

Rosalind had to support the kid all right but her husband wasn't an invalid. He was in Sing Sing. Yet what was the use of telling people that? She had her pride.

Of course some people knew the truth. Jack Knife, who ran the Happiness Club, knew it. And what might be called the inner circle of the Happiness Club knew it. But they never referred to it. To them, to all of them, Sing Sing was a most obnoxious name. If they were forced to discuss it they preferred to use the phrase "up the river." That phrase seemed to them far politer, more considerate and in better taste generally.

In fact, when a friend or acquaintance was missing and a member of the inner circle was questioned about it, he simply had to explain with a gesture. A thumb thrown over the shoulder—that, too, meant Sing Sing.

Rosalind was a pretty girl. There was no nonsense about her and she would stand for no nonsense. She had short yellow hair that curled around her small ears. Her eyes were large, ingenuous, and a deep blue in color. Her compact, supple body gave her strength and assurance, within as well as without.

In the Happiness Club her manner was one of give-and-take. She could give 'em back as good as they gave her, she claimed, a little boastfully. If any guy got fresh, well, she got fresh. If any guy got rough, so did she. And when the birds got soft and sappy she could handle 'em, too, although these last required more delicate manipulation. They didn't mean nothing, they didn't. They just forgot they had a wife and a home.

This manner of give-and-take was Rosalind's armor in the Happiness Club. One needed an armor there. Especially if one were a girl with a kid to support. Without such an armor one was soon beaten, done for, vanquished in the sorriest of battles, where victory itself was none too glorious. Rosalind's duties were to check hats and coats and sell cigarets. And like all the other girls she had to entertain the gentlemen guests, and through her wit and audacity induce them to buy drinks and then more drinks.

As for the Happiness Club—well, there may be some slight defence for Rosalind but there is little or none for

48th STREET

By OSCAR GRAEVE

what he's doing." But Wallie's anger was not spent.

the Happiness Club. Perhaps that is its defence. It was so frankly, so brazenly, so unashamedly, what it was. It was at its liveliest about three in the morning, but from midnight until six gentlemen wandered in for entertainment and refreshment. All sorts. Gangsters and salesmen. Garage owners and shop owners. Men who sold booze and men who sold bonds. Quiet thieves and quieter thugs and rowdy visitors from out-of-town.

And no sooner were the guests seated than the girls would pounce upon them. "Ain't I seen you before, dearie? Gee, I'm glad you come in! I'm that thirsty!"

The Happiness Club was a night club stripped to the essentials for catering to starved and sodden hungers for gayeties and escapes; bare of the famous orchestras, the silent waiters, the elaborate decorations of the night clubs that the wealthier people know. The Happiness Club was a dive, a speak-easy, a gyp joint.

True, there was a pianist and a violinist, and there was dancing on the tiniest of cleared spaces where one was forced to draw one's partner into closer and closer proximity while the music whimpered insidiously.

The Happiness Club didn't even enjoy the distinction of being unique. It was in Forty-eighth Street and up and down that street and in other side streets as far south as Bleecker and as far north as Harlem and beyond were other Happiness Clubs. Sometimes the authorities would close a Happiness Club whereupon a Joy Club would spring up a mile away or a block away and, sometimes, actually next door to the old club. And all of this of course was in the imperial City of New York and in the year of Our Lord nineteen hundred and twenty-six.

But we're forgetting Rosalind . . .

Jack Knife had known Rosalind's husband well and for many years and Rosalind had come to him asking what she should do for a living now that the breadwinner of the family had been temporarily removed. Jack Knife, however, knew Rosalind's husband much better than he knew Rosalind. Rosalind had never mingled to any extent with the inner circle of the Happiness Club.

The interview made by appointment over the telephone.

took place in the Club one night at nine o'clock when it was as deserted as a theater on Sunday morning. Not a single pink light glittered on a single table, and only a naked bulb overhead glittered a sardonic whiteness on the walls to show that their damask was cotton and stained, to show that the looped orange draperies that covered the ceiling were torn and discolored.

There they sat, Rosalind with her yellow hair curling neatly around her ears, and Jack Knife, clean shaven, his nose disfigured and broken in some forgotten brawl, his body as spare of flesh, as clean of line, as powerful as a leopard's; who had, indeed, like a leopard been forced to fight his way through various strange and ugly jungles until, within the Happiness Club, had come comparative peace, comparative affluence.

"I suppose I could get a job in a store like I had before," said Rosalind, "but what do I get paid? Nothing! Not enough for the kid an' me anyways."

"Who'll look after the kid while you're working?"

"My sister. I'm living with her and her husband down at Bayside now. But I got to pay my share for me an' Bobby. They're paying for their house, see, and when sis needs a new pair of stockings it's a tragedy. That's how hard up they are."

Drawing by F. Delevante

"How old's the kid?"

"Three years next November."

"I got a kid, too," said Jack Knife, with a little flicker of his eyelashes.

"Yeh, I know," said Rosalind. She knew, too, that Jack Knife was crazy about his kid, and that not so very long ago his wife had left him and had taken the kid along with her.

She remembered his wife. She had seen her once in a Broadway restaurant. A pretty woman grown soft. A large blonde woman with a silly, loud laugh. A dandelion blown into seed. Rosalind suddenly felt sorry for Jack Knife.

He may have read her thoughts. "What else do you know about me?" he demanded.

So she was forced to tell. "Well, I know about your wife leaving you an' all that."

"I always tried to give her a square deal," he said; "but she had it on me awright! An' maybe I don't blame her. When I get drinkin', see, I go nuts. I don't drink nothin' for a long time but when it gets me it gets me good. I don't know what I'm doing, see? An' that's why she left me. Well, maybe she's right."

"I guess you miss the kid?"

"Yeh, he's a great kid awright. A young prize-fighter, that's him. Him and me was great pals. I can see him onct in a while, y'understand, but what's that? It's like eatin' spinach when you want beefsteak. But we're talkin' about you an' not me, Rosalind."

"We're talking about how I'm going to make a living," said Rosalind hopefully.

"You can work here if you want to. I need somebody for cigarets and the coat room. I'll pay you fifteen a week."

"I can make that much in a store."

"Yeh, but you ain't countin' the tips. Tips on the cigarets. You keep 'em. Tips on the checking—we split on 'em. Tips for being nice to these here bozos."

"Yeh, but look here!" said Rosalind. "I'm straight, see?"

"Straight!" he repeated.

"Yeh, look here!" she said again, a little angrily, a little defiantly, "I didn't even know what Wallie's business was when I married him."

"An' what did you do when you found out?" he asked with mockery.

"Well, I decided I had to stick—an' then there was Bobby."

Her simplicity disarmed him. He nodded. After a moment he said, "You can be straight here if you want to. Only it's harder."

"How much'll I make?"

"Aw, forty-fifty a week. Forty-fifty easy."

Rosalind reflected. "All right. Where do I hang my hat?" she asked.

AFTER a time Jack Knife often found himself watching Rosalind. He himself was always sober where every one else was drunk in some lesser or greater degree—every one except Rosalind. He kept an eye on things. He was always ready to reason with the unreasonable, impress the impressionable and throw out the objectionable—although one had to be extraordinarily objectionable to be objectionable to the Happiness Club.

But more and more often he found himself watching Rosalind. He liked to watch her as, with the cigaret tray in front of her, she moved from table to table. She had a smile, a toss of her yellow head, for every one, and a dancing step that took her away from the clutch of hot, avid hands. He liked to watch her taking the hats and coats from his guests and handing them back again

SHE wanted to save up enough money so she and Wallie and the kid could go somewheres and start over.

HE CAME out, worn and pallid, and filled with the anger of hoarded injustices.

accurately to guests somewhat befuddled and searching their waistcoat pockets for hat checks. "Oh, sure, Mister! This is your hat. Look again. No mistakes here. Why do you think it's called the Happiness Club?"

He took delight in watching her and in listening to her, a slow and secret smile hovering around his tight lips.

He didn't, however, like to watch her when in moments otherwise unoccupied she sat down at the tables with men, and joked and laughed with them and induced them to buy her drinks which she either forgot to drink or managed to upset. Jack Knife frowned at such moments with a feeling that he did not altogether understand.

What did skirts mean to him? Nothing! He had seen them come and go, an endless procession of frails, and they were all alike. Frails! That was a good name for 'em. Just in it for what they got out of a guy and then too frail to hold onto what they got. Putting all they made on their backs. Silly, vain, fluttering. None of 'em played the game square—not even the one he had married. He had first been drawn to her because he had thought she was different from the rest, on the level, ready to stand by a guy through his weakness as well as his strength. And even she hadn't played the game fair. Not in every way. But he wanted to play it fair. That was the thing he lived by. And now he didn't want to get mixed up with no skirts. Especially not a skirt with her man up the river and him a pal of his. Nothin' doing!

Nevertheless, he said to Rosalind, "Say, listen, Rosalind, you needn't sit down with them saps like the other girls."

She gave him a long and steady glance. "Why not?"

He was embarrassed. "Well, that ain't your job. You got enough to do wit' your cigarets an' checkin' coats an' everything."

"You didn't say that when I come here."

"I'm saying it now."

"Say, look here, Jack! I'm no better than any of the rest of 'em."

"Sure you are," he insisted doggedly, and strangely enough a little ashamed to say it.

"I ain't. We're all after the same thing."

"What's that?"

"Money."

"Aw, money ain't everything, Rosalind."

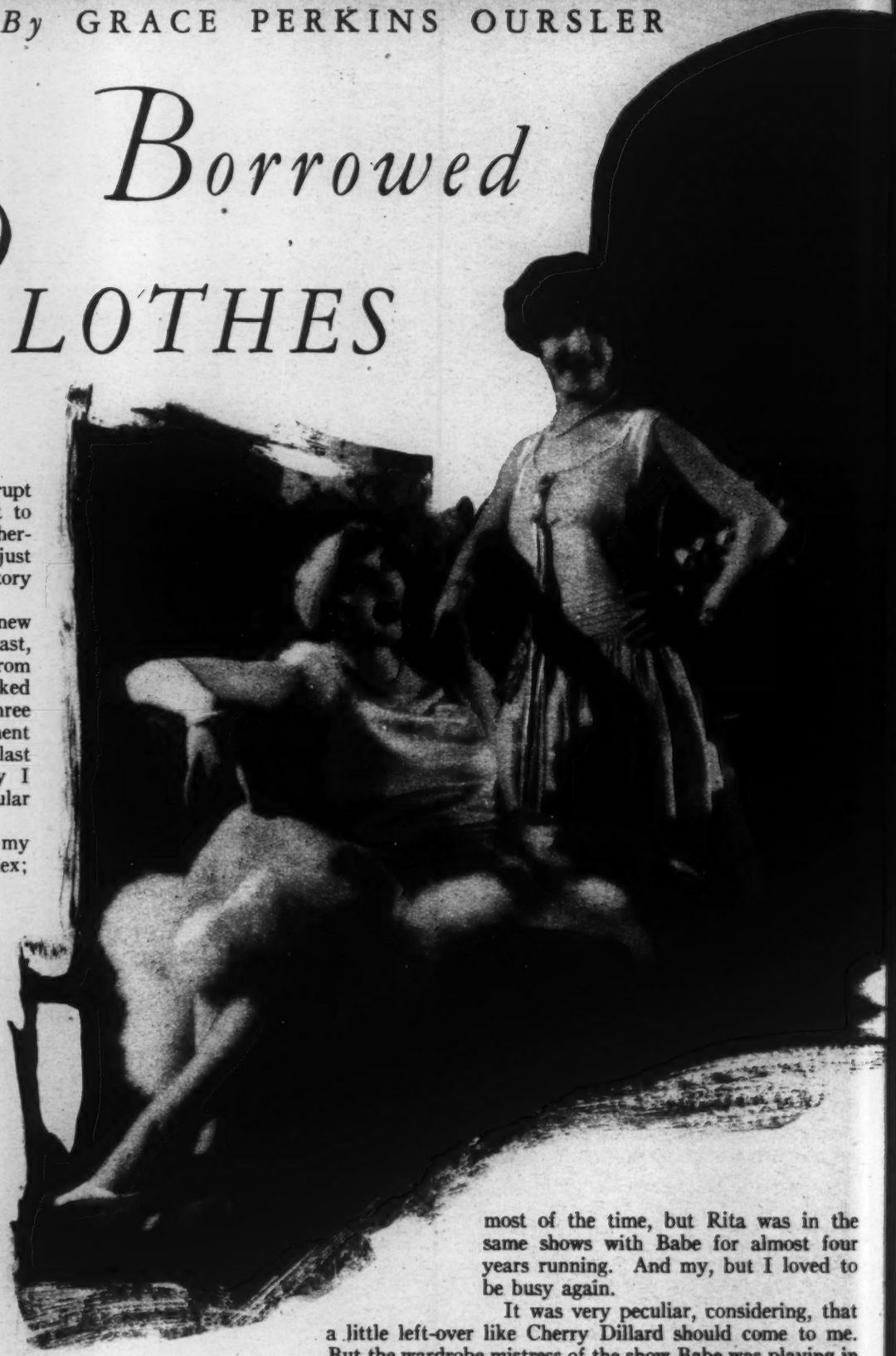
"Yeh, you're a good one to say that, you are."

"Well, it's different wit' me."

"Yeh, it's different with you. [*Continued on page 95*]

By GRACE PERKINS OURSLER

Borrowed Clothes



NOW, don't interrupt me! If you want to hear the truth about Cherry's love affair, you've just got to let me tell the story my way.

Very few people knew Cherry Dillard. At least, not as I knew her. From the time that Cherry walked into my house nearly three years ago, until the moment she walked out of it last night with Roger Tracy I felt as if I had a particular mortgage on her.

Babe always calls my motherly instinct a complex; but then I pay very little attention to Babe's pearls of wisdom. Anyway, it was just after Mary, my eldest daughter, had gotten married, that I decided to rent out rooms. With Dad gone, and Teddy married and Mary, and only Babe left, I found myself terribly lonely.

Now, Babe is a dear child, but she isn't very companionable. She always had the bug of going on the stage, and once she broke into the theatrical business, I saw very little of her. Besides, when Babe was working she could give only about twenty dollars a week to the house. And really most of that had to be put away for dancing lessons, or for the days she was out of a job! And although Mary was taking care of my rent and all, I just couldn't seem to make both ends meet. So I decided to cash in on this big apartment I had, and take in a few roomers.

It started by my taking in two little chorus girls who were friends of Babe's. They were lovely girls—Eleanor and Rita—and soon became like my own family. It wasn't as if I were renting out rooms at all! They called me Mom, and I took care of them and helped them fight their battles just like I did Babe. Eleanor was out on the road most of the time, but Rita was in the same shows with Babe for almost four years running. And my, but I loved to be busy again.

It was very peculiar, considering, that a little left-over like Cherry Dillard should come to me. But the wardrobe mistress of the show Babe was playing in at the time, spoke to the girls about her. It seemed that Cherry was a small town girl in New York, and was eating her heart out with loneliness. And one night Cherry came to the theater, and Rita and Babe felt so sorry for her that they brought her up to me.

Well! We all sat around the kitchen table and had milk and sandwiches like we always do. And that poor little waif of a Cherry Dillard went straight to my heart! She was so awestruck at the little spread we had, and at the way Rita and Eleanor and Babe and I talked and laughed together! She seemed to think I ought to be some sort of female ogre! I didn't learn until weeks later that her own mother had beat her until Cherry couldn't stand it any longer, and had run away!

Fine Feathers Sometimes *mask* Fine Birds

THE swank of that little waif—talking about her "electrical engineer." Rita laughed in her face.

Poor little kid! Poor? I couldn't begin to tell you how pathetic that child looked. Mind you, the girl had a job—a job in a dry cleaner's shop. But she looked the most forlorn little cast-off you ever laid eyes on! Shabby buttoned shoes, cotton stockings, a blue serge dress that must have grown up with her, and an old checkered coat that had been her mother's and had been handed down to her two years previously!

She came from Cananduagua. Upstate. Her father worked in a factory, and she had eight brothers and sisters. Poor as a crumb! She had come all the way down to New York City on trolley cars! You know that child had spunk! When she landed in town she had only two dollars and the wardrobe mistress was the only person she knew! It was through her that Cherry got the job at the dry cleaner's.

And now there she was, sitting at my kitchen table, wide-eyed and wonderstruck! Sitting with three dainty, light-hearted little dancers who had good food, good clothes, plenty of friends, and loads of excitement in their lives! I just tell you it cut me to the heart. I remember when Rita asked her a question and Cherry gulped, too frightened to answer, I had to turn away and pretend to be lighting the burner under the tea so they wouldn't see me wiping away a tear. Babe always teases me because I can weep at an iceman's tale of his sick baby just as genuinely as I can weep over my own tragedies. But I guess mothers aren't mothers for nothing; and you don't go through your own life of ups and downs without being able to understand other folks' troubles.

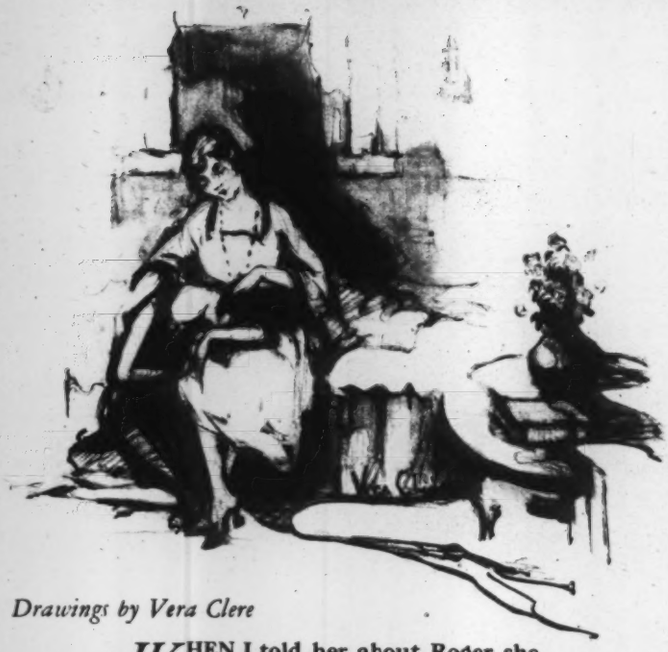
Well anyway, to make a long story short, I gave Cherry the maid's room for three dollars a week. It had its own bathroom, all except the tub, and it was fixed up as pretty and attractive as could be with blue muslin. Cherry was enchanted! She could hardly believe her good fortune! To have such a gay little room all to herself, and to live in the house with such happy, comradely people!

Well, my dear, the next day Cherry moved in. She brought with her a shoe box containing all her things. I tell you, I just wanted to cry when I answered the door-bell and saw that child standing there in those awful clothes, hugging a shoe box to her. In the shoe box were handkerchiefs, a toothbrush, a comb, hairpins, about a yard of pink ribbon, a pair of much darned cotton stockings, two snapshots of herself, and an old copy of "Lorna Doone," which she told me was the only book she had ever owned! That was all she had! That was all she had taken with her when she ran away!

The girls were out to dinner that night, so I made Cherry have a bite of supper with me. She stuttered all over the place before she accepted, trying to explain that she didn't want to impose upon us. She wanted to pay for everything she got. Poor little tike! I thought when she saw the cold chicken and hot gravy and baked potatoes and chocolate cake that I set out on the table her eyes would fall out of her head!

At first Cherry was too scared to talk much; but I drew her out, and soon had her telling me about her home town and her school and her parents and of how she had run away. She had little love for her family except for her younger sister—whom she didn't even dare write to! I never saw any one so thoroughly intimidated as Cherry was. I talked to her the best I knew how; told her she ought to write to her mother and father, and explained that they could do nothing to her, since she had passed her twenty-first birthday and was her own mistress. Oh, if you could have seen the change that it made in her! It was as if a ton of brick had been taken off her shoulders!

After supper I sat by in my rocker, sewing fresh ribbons on Babe's undies, while Cherry wrote her letter.



Drawings by Vera Clere

WHEN I told her about Roger she cried as if her heart would break.

I pretended not to notice her because she was crying a bit as she scribbled. But all the time I was taking her in.

Cherry was anything but a beauty! But as I stole a few sharp glances at her now and then, I decided that much could be done for her. Many's the time I've heard of the fresh glow that life in the country gives. Well, far be it from me to shatter any theories, but I've met lots of girls from the country in my day, and most of them looked sallow and flat-chested enough to pass for a waif of the slums.

Now Cherry. With all her lumpy clothes, her figure was good enough. But her hair! Red hair—or at least the right kind of red hair—can give any girl a hundred yards, advantage. But Cherry's was a sort of raw orange. It was evident that she combed it, for it lay flat and plastered around her tired, questioning little face. But it had never had more than a nodding acquaintance with a brush. And her skin! And her eyes! With her hair snatched back so, her eyes looked positively weird. They made you scared of her. They were the strangest color I've ever seen in a human being. They were the color of wild mustard!

Of course, after I had had her in hand a while, and her hair had been bobbed and waved about her tight little head, Cherry's eyes didn't stab a person so. But they were always uncanny. And except at rare moments they never lost their peculiar expression. Aspirin eyes, I called them. They look sort of lulled, and semi-slumberous—as if she had taken something to quiet their pain . . .

Well, that night after Cherry had written her letter we became quite chummy. And before she went to bed I gave her two dresses that Babe had grown tired of, a pair of silk stockings, and a hat. And gradually, as days went on, I renovated her. But I had to be very careful. As she insisted upon paying for things, I would "sell" her a dress of Rita's or Eleanor's or Babe's for a couple of dollars.

So Cherry began to blossom out just the tiniest little bit. She was less scrawny after I had been feeding her up a while; and a lot less scared. She even began calling me Mom. Then she began to imitate the other girls. Behind her closed door we could hear her taking exercises the same as they did; she started the morning shower habit, too, and I'm sure she went without an occasional meal to buy herself cold cream and witch hazel and mouth wash and honey and almond. And once she even came home with a bottle of bath salts and a can of dusting powder! She couldn't afford manicures, and I wish you could see the way that poor child would cut and mangle her fingers in an attempt to make them presentable! Until one night Eleanor gave her a manicure, and taught her a few little tricks.

Well, time went on, and Cherry changed from the job at the dry cleaner's to one as telephone girl. Eight months later she landed a job as a sales-girl in the lamp department of Warner's. That did wonders for her. She began to meet nice people. There was a Miss Ryan, the buyer of the lamp department, whom Cherry would tell me about. I guess Cherry imitated Miss Ryan's mannerisms almost as much as she did Rita's and Babe's. And from what I could tell, Cherry spent most of her lunch hours wandering around the store and gazing at the treasure it held.

By this time the other girls were a little sick of Cherry. I really can't blame them. Her sense of inferiority made her adopt a certain air of mystery. She pretended to be keeping little secrets to herself of great importance. *I* understood. For often I saw the anguish in her eyes when she overheard one of the girls twittering over the phone in one of these prolonged now-you-chase-me conversations. And several times I saw Cherry peep out of her bedroom door at Babe, all dressed up like an heiress, going out with a beau!

Gradually Cherry began to meet a few people. None of the chaps that played around with my girls gave Cherry a second look. But she began to meet a few fellows outside. And oh! it made me want to cry to listen to that child gush over the phone. Positively hysterical. And the swank of the little waif when she would announce to us that she was "going to the movies tonight with an electrical engineer!" Rita laughed right out in her face once—until I threw her a look that quieted her good and proper.

But I didn't really blame the girls. Cherry would come out with remarks that sounded absurd. One evening she had come home through 47th Street, where there is a costumer's shop, and that evening she told us about the ghostly costumes in the darkened second floor window.

"They were fancy dress for folks to wear to masquerades," she said with a queer little smile. "But they looked like dead dreams. And I couldn't help thinking that perhaps folks often do dress up in dead dreams when they go out on parties."

"You're crazy!" Babe had informed her coolly.

Then, for one entire week, she was very late coming home after supper. The girls [*Continued on page 110*]

THEY left for Colorado from the Little Church Around the Corner.

A Broadway Comedian plays a Society Rôle— *and the* Laugh is on the Four Hundred

HAM and YEGGS

ON THE stairs she breathes—eager as a girl—"How do I look, honey?"

By MAURICE MARKS

ACCORDING to Mr. Shakespeare, a hunch is something you knows nothing about till you follows it, but mostly, if you does, you picks a winner. All my life I've followed that system, and without passing myself no geraniums I been right more times than I been wrong.

Naturally, I can't never expect the frau to see it that way. No married man could. Mostly, when I says I got a hunch about something Tillie Ann sniffs and smiles crooked. But just the same that sense of feeling things landed me a head-liner in vaudeville, gave me a success with my first production, "Girls and Giggles," and, as even Tillie has to admit, gets us more publicity for the new show than if we sat down and doped it out with a flock of press agents.

Every since Charley Joslyn, the big Wall Street magnate, takes a shine to us coming back on the boat from Europe, I'm hep that the frau has society ambitions. Not that she comes out into the open about it, but when Joslyn and his partner, "Beaver" Brown, gets me to play golf with them regular, Tillie never lets out a whimper about my being away all day Sundays. Instead, she's awful interested about the kinda folks I'm meeting, with questions like "Have I been introduced to any of their women folks?" and so forths.

So when I tells her Charley's invited us down to his Long Island estate at Midhaven for the next week-end, she's all sugar and molasses.

"Oh, Hank," she raptures, "you don't mean to tell me we're really to be guests at that swell summer home I seen pictured in the papers!"

"Yeh," I nods; "I know you ain't got a thing to wear, so rush right down the Avenue and make the old bank roll look ridiculous."

"Hank Howard," she gurgles, throwing both arms around my neck, "you're a dear! When is the date?"

"This being Wednesday, day after tomorrow's the week-end, unless they switches the calendar."

"It's awful short notice," she squints at herself in the mirror like she's figuring how her new boyish bob will impress the four or more hundred, "but I'll be ready. How'd you come to get the bid?"

"Oh," I airifies, "Charley's so impressed with my great success as a producer of revues, I guess he wants to get my private ideas on how to stage a big Wall Street scoop."

"Don't step out of character," she warns me. "It's tough enough for you to be funny on the stage."

"Well, Tillie girl," I continues, "since I'll be shooting Scotch shinny most of the daytimes with the boys, it'll give you a swell chance to freeze solid to the dames. So run along and have a buying debauch."

Which last, while said more in the spirit of jest, as the saying goes, is carried out to the letter. Not that the frau needs to take any one's dust when it comes to style. As a looker she can give most Johns eye trouble just passing them by. But when she blossoms forth in her new sport togs at Midhaven, even a flock of them society wrens

has a rush of envy to the head over her gaudy get up.

Charley sure has a swell lay-out. You've read about it, of course—his one hundred and sixty acres, stables, kennels, what-nots and such, with the main bowling alley parked in the middle of sunken gardens and trees. It's a landscape architect's idea of heaven, I guess, for I ain't seen nothing grander, even on the stage. Our rooms—they give us a suite—overlooks the Sound, and Tillie Ann heaves a sigh as she glims the sunset through the French windows.

"It's beautiful," she murmurs. "No wonder they calls it Croonrest; it's like a poem."

"Where'd you shove the shaving cream?" I asks, hunting through the suitcases.

"You'll find it in your bathroom where the man undoubtedly put it when he unpacked our luggage."

I shoots her a look. The way she says "man" and "luggage" tells me Tillie Ann is all cued up to play a big part. "All I seen so far," says I, "is a herd of funny-looking he-servants and that maid what wished herself onto you. The old buzz wagon made such good time I guess we're early."

"I'm glad," she says, "we had the car done over. A smart motor makes such a good impression."

"Yeh," I agrees. "I'm going to catch forty winks before dinner. Go practice your cross-word puzzle language on the lady waitress."

In my room I finds the valet, or whatever it is they've loaned me, laying out my clothes. He's a soft-footed, rosy-faced guy that I makes friends with at once. "Elder" is his name; and I'm to ring if I wants him. Meanwhile, there's cigarets and cigars on the table, mineral water, cracked ice, and a coupla bottles Mr. Volstead overlooked.

"Dinner at eight, sir," is his exit gag.

In dressing-gown and slippers I'm stretched out on the bed with a clinking high-ball and a cigaret. The frau is right. This is the life.

I'm trying to dope out some stunts that'll get unusual press stuff for the new edition of "Girls and Giggles," when Tillie knocks on the door.

"First call," she announces; "overture at eight." The way she says it shows she means business.

"Okay with me," I tells her, steering for the bath.

When I puts the final twist to my bow tie and goes in for Tillie, she's ready and waiting.

On the stairs she breathes—eager as a kid—"How do I look, honey?"

"Great," I grins. "You're all these other janes thinks they might be and ain't. I'll bet you're the easiest thing to lamp that ever stumbled down these steps." And she gives my arm a squeeze.

Charley introduces all around. There's quite a mob. A Mrs. Walter Irvin, widow or something. A Count Companelli, two society couples, "Beaver" Brown—Charley's partner—two young women, and Joslyn's sons—Charley Junior and Tom. The last are fine lads, Tom twenty-four and Junior a year older. "You look more like their sister to me," I tells Mrs. Joslyn.

"It's the children keep me young," she smiles, and I see she ain't mad a bit at my opening. "Now let me introduce the baby—Kathaleen, this is Mr. Hank Howard, whose dancing you admire so much."

I'll say this Kathaleen is a luloo. "Kit" her brothers call her. She's about as pretty a picture as you could pluck off a magazine cover. She's got dark eyes that snap like baby spots. And boy, she knows how to use them. She's next to me at dinner, with Tom, who I see right away is her favorite by the way she picks on him, next to her. The widow or divorcée female is on my other side, but too took up with Count Spaghetti Italiano to waste much ammunition on me. Tillie Ann's across the table between Brown and an old guy with a merry twinkle, who looks like Mr. Pickwick. I finds out after how he's a big railroad lawyer named Harrington Ordway. But for the minute he's having the time of his life trying to kid Tillie. And that's some job, even for a railroad lawyer. The dinner is a great success. Regular hotel service, only noiseless. I can't help noticing how Mrs. Joslyn ain't any more fussed than if we was in the one-armed lunch.

Drawings by Arthur Litle

JUST then the robbers hold the old fellow up in true movie style.

I'm watching my step though. There's a flock of forks and things I'm apt to miscue on. So I keeps an eye on Tillie. Talk about to the manner born. She's there with all flags flying. Never a false start. By waiting to see what implement Tillie picks, I don't make no bad breaks—which I wouldn't anyway seeing I got the natural instincts of a gentleman.

Another thing that strikes me is the free and easy conversation. No stiff formality. These birds is all high society, but as far as being on dignity is concerned it might be any one's house or mine.

"Oh, Mr. Howard," smiles Kathaleen, "have you ever acted for the movies?"

"No, miss," I assures her, "but Tillie Ann has. Why?"

"I thought you might give us some tips. Tom and I are just wild about the movies."

"You're not thinking of going into them?"

"Sh!" she warns. "The subject is taboo with dad and the mater. But we're crazy to try——"

"You would be."

"How's that?"

"Crazy to think of it," I assures her. "What would you young folks, with everything money can buy, want to muss around the studios for?"

"It's the thrill of it." And her eyes snap!

"H'm, h'm," nods Tom, who's leaning over echoing everything she says. "Sis and I are fed up on this social stuff."

Ain't that just like life? There's Tillie Ann, who's acted in everything from a tent to the town hall, dying to bust

"Fine," says I, taking the cue, "shoot the fifteen ball and the big secret."

into the charmed circle; and here's two kids born right in the middle dying to bust out. I could laugh.

"You go talk to Tillie Ann Talbot, that's the frau's stage moniker. She'll give you more alibis for not acting than your dad can pull on the links."

"But it must be perfectly fascinating," Kit persists. "Tom and I run over to the studio whenever we can sneak away."

Beating me on the links sure gives Charley a thrill.

"Which one?" I asks, wondering what's on their minds.

"The Mogul-Majestic. They've got a big place, you know, fifteen miles from here."

"So they have. I hadn't thought of that. Tillie Ann worked for them last season, and we got to know their chief director, Conrad, pretty well."

"Oh, did you?" Kathaleen enthuses. "Isn't he splendid!" Then turning to Tom she says, "Don't you think we can take Mr. Howard into our secret?"

"Sure," he nods, "but not here." Then in a stage whisper, "Say, Mr. Howard, meet us in the billiard room later, will you?"

"What are you three getting so mysterious about?" sallies Mrs. Joslyn from her end of the table.

"Oh," perks Kathaleen quickly, "since Mr. Howard doesn't play bridge, we're trying to inveigle him into a pool game after dinner."

"Look out, Hank," warns Charley, "that innocent-looking kid is a young shark."

"She'll have to step some," I grins, "because I used to sleep on a pool table and keep my collar buttons in the pockets." It's old Joe Miller stuff, but gets a laugh all around as the dinner breaks up. As my pal Lou Frazer, of the "Four Falling Frazers," says, "Why write new nifties when the old stuff gets by?"

Tillie wigwags me for a sotto voice confab. "What limit do these millionaires consider decent for bridge, Hank?"

"Search me. Why all the [*Continued on page 115*]

BOSTON
WASHINGTON
CHICAGO
SAN FRANCISCO

EVERY Town's

—Does Any Big City Offer Release When Youth Seeks Adventure?

"IF ONLY I could get away from this small town!"

It is the immemorial cry of youth when the harness irks unbearably, when rebellion burns its hottest against the place-where-nothing-ever-happens. Every small town girl thinks her community the stuffiest, dullest of places—where she can't go in for lipstick without inviting dark prophecies of her future from the dear, sweet neighbors; where the young man two doors away is only the grown-up kid who threw paper wads at her in school.

After supper when the long evening stretches emptily ahead she stares unseeingly across the familiar plot of front yard, seeing a gleaming vision of cities. In their jewel-strung avenues, their towering buildings, they seem to hold everything she lacks and longs for. They are the dwelling places of innumerable fascinating people; the romantic setting for high adventures. There no one knows anything about her, except how interesting she looks . . .

But when she goes adventuring from the narrow confines of her home, is it the storied city of her imaginings she finds? Or just a place a little bigger, a little noisier, a little livelier—but quite as "small town" as the place she came from?

Drawings by
C. J. Mulholland

THE Boston children, bound for the Lord's houses on Sunday morning, looked at me curiously and askance.

LIFE before Boston had meant two things to me: Daytimes presided over by Aunt Betsy—black as with shoe polish—who believed in a distressing amount of neck-washing, but in an equal generosity with steeple-shaped chocolate creams. And nighttimes when I hugged my arms about the tent my knees made of the sheets and listened to the whistle of trains.

They shrilled, and the sound was a silver pennant streaming on a black wind. My feet squirmed to follow after. For trains went to cities. Those wheels that churned the miles away carried one to places that were a blend of ancient Bagdad and Horatio Alger, Jr. In strange streets Danger lurked delightfully, waiting to be vanquished by brave Youth. Even at the age of going-on-seven I planned to seek Romance among swarming throngs, and ride in a subway.

Then my father, in the Federal service, was ordered off to Boston.

Boston was a city. Not a government post, such as father was usually sent to. Not a country town such as grandmother lived in. But a city with street cars that would run over you if you weren't careful, and policemen, and fire engines. We children had our ten sunburnt feet thrust into shoes. No mere sandals, those shoes. The baby had to learn to walk all over again. And Aunt Betsy quit wearing mob caps on the streets and bought a wig.

Four of us were put into schools where there were sanitary drinking fountains and children who spoke with queer, grown-up broad a's. Some of them had grandparents who had known Longfellow or Emerson. And one little girl with gold eye-glasses tried to tell me that Miss Alcott hadn't really known any one like Laurie. God did not strike that little girl dead either.

I was entranced with it all. Bunker Hill, Plymouth Rock in a little iron cage, Cambridge with its drug stores that sold college ices, and its museums with flowers spun of glass. Yes, really and truly glass! And the road down which Paul Revere had galloped, shouting as in the second reader:

"Up, up! The red coats are coming. Up, up! And defend your homes!"

What a city! The past alive about you—and escalators that wound you slowly upward from one floor to another! I felt as if I were living in a story-book.

How and exactly when it changed I don't know. But within a few months Boston ceased to be a blazoned, italicized word and became simply the name of the town where I lived. More people lived there than in any other I had known; otherwise it was not much different from the rest. In that town, as in the others, clothes were washed on Mondays and pies were baked on Saturdays. And on the first warm spring Sunday morning when I stayed home from Sunday school to try out my new two-wheeled skates, I was looked at curiously and askance by children bound for the Lord's houses.

"Maybe she's a heathen," offered one of them, as they hurried by.

That afternoon I rang the bell of Ellen Bacon's house. She was my current best friend. Could Ellen come out and play, I asked her tall, pompadoured sister. No, Ellen most emphatically could not come out and play on a Sunday afternoon. *She* spent the Sabbath afternoons seated on a dining-room chair learning Bible verses. I was amazed. Sundays here, then, were just as bad as Sundays other places.

Poor Ellen . . . But my sympathy was cut short by

a Small Town

By
LELLA WARREN

the pompadoured one's next remark. She wasn't at all sure that her mother would allow Ellen to play even on week days with a child who romped scandalously on the streets during church time. How had I been raised anyway? Like a heathen, she would say.

I backed down the last step by the time she spoke the last word. And fled, remembering bitterly the fifteen cent valentine I had sent Ellen.

CHICAGO, though, might be different. It was much bigger and had elevated trains that whizzed like magic carpets so close to people's windows that you could look in if you wanted to. There was a fairy marvel of an apartment store, too, with a toyland playroom where we could ride on a merry-go-round, and not pay any fare.

The government hospital where my father was stationed was like a white stone castle at the edge of the Lake. It faced on a boulevard—a slick, automobile-thronged boulevard, where oh, such dressed-up little girls lived. They wore patent leather slippers every day and sat daintily playing paper dolls until spick and span maids came out on the porches and said, "Dinner is served."

Now that even our baby could eat meat at night, we children had our dinner at six, too. But Aunt Betsy rang a bell, rang it thoroughly. Because of this I felt myself alien until the day I acquired my walking doll. After that the very proper little girls had me up on their steps, and played with the new doll. And presently they asked me to join the club.

I had heard of clubs. Once in Southport I had been playing under an old foot-bridge when some of the big twelve-year-olds had been talking there.

"Let's have pink and green for our colors," said one.

"All right, and I'll tell you what, kids!" It was the grocer's daughter shrilling above the rest. "We'll all carry pressed four leaf clovers in our lockets. And swear a blood oath not to reveal what's in them to a single soul outside the club."

They had applauded this while I sniffed at the nonsense of their old secret.

A BOY spoiled my triumph by confiding that Carlos was filthy with legation liquor.

SHE stuffed up the key-hole—this Philadelphia girl who did not believe in keeping rules.

But this was not like that. It was a real club that had meetings and initiation. Initiation consisted in wearing my hair in funny little plaits on Saturdays and running errands for the club girls all week. What a long week it was. But after it was over I could wear the club emblem and carry the Box! To be sure the club emblem was only a knot of mauve and yellow ribbon pinned on with an old beauty pin I happened to have. But the Box! Each of the other girls carried one, tucked into her pocket or folded into a handkerchief. They were never without them. As they took their turns at jacks they laid them like great treasures importantly down at their sides, and snatched them jealously up again the minute they were through. The boxes were about two inches square in dimension, and a lovely Easter-egg lavender in hue. But it was the indescribable sound they made rattling in their owners' hands that most intrigued me. A mysterious, enticing rattle that might mean almost anything within—precious stones or tiny gold nuggets even!

On Saturday night at the stroke of twelve I was allowed to open mine for the first time. I drew it slowly from underneath my pillow and my fingers fumbled as I pulled the halves apart. The contents spattered over the coverlet and onto the floor. Two old underwear buttons and a spoonful of split, dried peas . . .

I sobbed with chagrin.

Girls, I thought with disgust late into that night, girls formed silly clubs and put up a bluff even when they lived on boulevards.

PHILADELPHIA first came into my ken during my boarding school days. I had a roommate. In fact I had several roommates. But one remembered only Edith out of any group of girls. Because she came from Philadelphia that city became responsible in my mind for her languid scorn of Girls Who Kept Rules. Responsible also for the fact that she wore a very red mouth splashed across a very white face, and clothes that took one by surprise when she turned her back. I once remarked on this propensity her gowns had for startling people from behind. "The fronts," I ended rather vaguely, "are so simple."

Her eyes gave that mysterious [*Continued on page 94*]

A. W. O. L.

AFTER WOMEN OR LIQUOR

IN ABOUT steen minutes I had the girl and we was ducking through the alley back to Pablo.

A LONG flash, right into our eyes, from away off on the port side towards Guantanamo and the beach. Next our call letter, again and again: Flash-flit-flit-flit. Flash-flit-flit-flit. Flash-flit-flit-flit . . .

Another beam out there in the dark; and our own rig begun sputtering from the signal bridge. Then a long message come blinking down to us from the flag-ship.

I caught the first four words and give up in disgust. It was all in code. But pretty soon things begun to stir aboard—and here was the old packet up mud-hooks and under way, swinging around to something south of west across the Caribbean.

Great gobs of grief, I thought, another spiggoty revolution. Why didn't they send the Pennsy? Did the U. S. S. Behemoth have to win all the wars? We had done our share of the night stuff at these maneuvers we had just finished. All hands, gobs and marines alike, were craving a couple of weeks rest with a lot of liberty. But no! Full speed ahead! Here we was hull down and booming along across the dizzy ocean looking for more work.

Shoving the Caribbean astern at about twenty knots, we made port some time in the night of the second day after leaving the Cuban city of Guantanamo. Morning colors found us sitting pretty, with a gray light-house just

Sometimes Desertion is *in the* Line *of* DUTY

By

PAUL GRAY

Formerly of the U. S. Marine Corps

abaft our starboard beam, inside the tropic harbor of Altobasco, main seaport of the hectic little Central American republic of Malprima. We manned the port rail at our first chance, looking ashore for trouble.

The early morning sun winked back at us from a thousand tiny windows in the town. Across the blue stretch of the bay we could see the tangle of masts and spars at the water-front and the square yellow custom house flanking the plaza. But we couldn't see no revolution.

Everything was quiet and shipshape, ashore and afloat. On the stubby government tug puffing shoreward from a big banana boat; on the custom house, and from the main masts of the shipping in the docks of Altobasco, the red, green, and black flag of the *Republica Malprima* floated serene.

It was funny, the birds along the rail thought, to be cruising along the line of them spig republics under sealed orders that way, with no revolution afoot.

The Old Man appeared, fussed up and full of gold braid, and went ashore in the gig. By and by he come back aboard, saying nothing. After chow liberty parties begun to shove off, and in the first shore boat was Lieutenant Commander Benson, the ship's morale officer, and a smart little stripe-and-a-halfer, both in civvies. Them two were supposed to be the regular gumshoe detail. As far as any one knew, they didn't come aboard again for a couple of days. Anyhow when they did they wasn't putting out no information to the enlisted personnel—even if they had found what they was after.

The longer we lay at Altobasco, the more rabid become the rumors flying around. Some said the Behemoth was here to handshake with a spig ex-president, who was about to marry a duchess from Europe. Some that a war was brewing and we were to protect American interests when it boiled over. Did I remark that all was serene aboard ship? Well, the first night, anyway. Jimmy Blake stirred us up a bit after that.

You see, late the first evening I found myself in a motor-sailer headed for town, with the three marines I hung around with occupying the same thwart. There was

Jimmy tried to reach out to her and his bracelet jingled.

Gunnery Sergeant Bud Gridley, Sergeant—Jimmy—Blake, a skinny blue-eyed corporal named Evans—and me, an acting-jack. The rest of the seats was full of gobs.

It was getting dark as we landed. Evans and I were ahead, with Bud and Jimmy following us at about ten paces. And just at the shore end of the pier we run across a gang of cargadors in an argument of some kind.

The longshoremen of them Caribbean waters are wild-eyed tamales who fight at the drop of a hat. Their blood is high proof and pretty close to the surface. Around their necks on a chain they wear big brass tags cut in the shape of stars and things, with numbers on them—their union cards, I suppose. In a fight they swing them chains around and cut each other to pieces with the tags. Nice guys, all right, but temperamental—more temper than mental. However, they been taught by the Monroe Doctrine that the U. S. marines is poison, so we didn't pay much attention to them.

"What the hell?" we heard suddenly, in a startled voice.

Evans and I spun around to find Bud standing still with his mouth open and Jimmy all action, his yellow chevrons flashing in and out among them grimy spigs like streaks of lightning. He reached over and picked up a little spig with blood streaming down his face and staining the shoulder of his dungarees. Four other cargadors was spinning on their ears in the dirt where Jimmy had plastered them. The marines had the situation well in hand!

"What happened?" sung out the three of us.

"Aw," Jimmy answered, "this li'l fella was fussin' along pretty good against a whole mob, when them four decided to whittle him down with knives. That ain't right, is it?"

"Cert'n'y not!" we agreed, looking around for action.

But by that time the gang had melted, the would-be assassins had got up and snuck away and there was nobody left to beat up.

Jimmy used his only clean handkerchief to patch up the little spig with, jabbering to him in Spanish as he worked.

"Go ahead up town, you fellas," he said. "I'm goin' to take this li'l guy home. I'll see you later."

Bud left us, and Evans and I went on into town and sat in the plaza watching the native crowd and listening to a barefoot, ragged spig band playing classical music so lonesome it would near make you cry. I guess none of us thought any more about Jimmy until next day. When we got aboard that night Bud was there ahead of us.

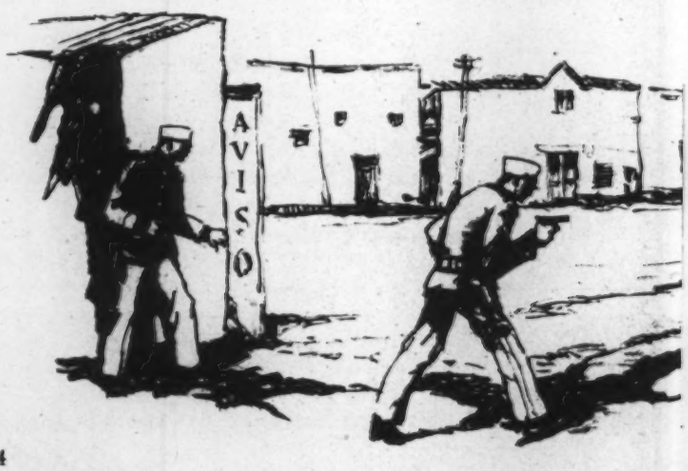
I happened to be in the top sergeant's office the next afternoon when he made a crack to the skipper, Captain Regan:

"What shall I do about Sergeant Blake, sir?"

I pricked up my ears. "Smiling Joe" Regan—only a nickname, that—frowned his hard-boiled frown and rubbed his chin.

"By the war!" he growled, "I'll teach him his lesson!"

So I gathered that Jimmy wasn't aboard. Evans did



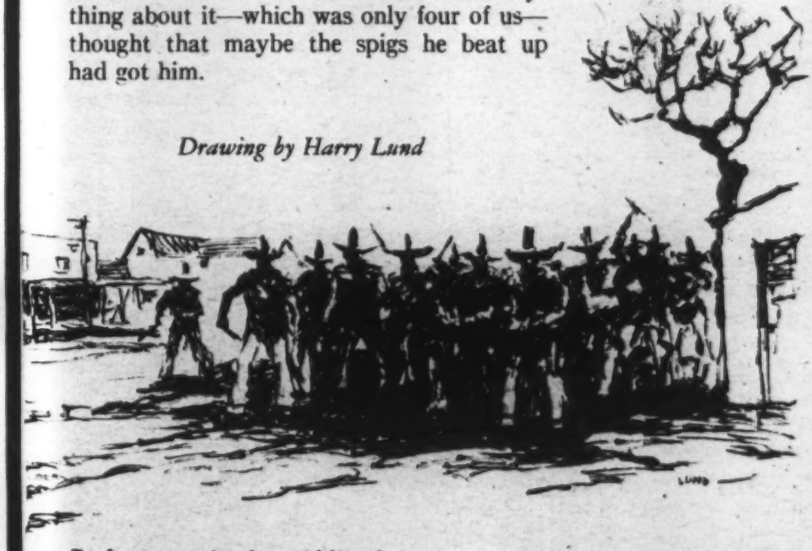
When the girl got next to what was up she gave way a step.

his trick on guard and had to make out the morning report showing the sergeant as A.W.O.L. In the regulations that means absent without leave. Now, Jimmy Blake had never—hardly ever—been known to overstay a leave. It seemed awful darn funny to me.

When Jimmy had been missing for two whole days the air in the marine compartment begun to get pretty close. You see, if the Bee shoved off for other parts without him, he'd likely be dropped from the rolls as a deserter; and desertion is no nice thing for a marine holding a good conduct medal with two bars to have on his record.

Don't think there was nothing done about it during them two days. Bud Gridley went ashore three times after him, but he come back looking glummer each time. All hands that knew anything about it—which was only four of us—thought that maybe the spigs he beat up had got him.

Drawing by Harry Lund



Bud was out in the middle of the street, waving his gat at the spigs.

You see, Altobasco although a good-sized town was just a narrow crescent around the harbor, fringed close on the land side by the deep tropic jungle. The outlying houses were half a mile from the beach at most. No sane white man would take to that jungle unarmed. Jimmy certainly had no weapons with him when he left the ship; and a U. S. marine in white cap, belt, and trousers, with a blue blouse—yellow stripes and all—would likely get no more notice there than a half million ton super-dreadnaught steaming down the main stem in Paragould, Arkansas.

The evening of the second day of Jimmy's absence, I was sitting on my ditty-box after chow when Bud Gridley stuck his blond head in the hatch forward and sung out for me.

"Dummy O'Neil!" he called, "hit the deck!" And when I had joined him, "Stand by to go ashore!"

"What's the dope, Sarge?" I asked, but he beat it for his quarters to get dressed.

I got ready and met him by the top's office. The top came out to hand us each an automatic, a holster, and two magazines of ball ammunition, which we hung on our belts. Then he turned to Bud.

"See Captain Regan again before you go," he said.

Bud and I both stepped in before the skipper and stood at attention. Smiling Joe gave me the double-oh, then sized Bud up mean from his toes to his cap ornament.

"The number two motor-sailer is yours for the night, Sergeant," he said. "The cox'n will stand by for your instructions. Don't fail to copper any bets on that State Department matter!"

I didn't know what he meant. Then he stepped closer and looked Bud in the eyes. His voice sounded like a file against armorplate as he stuck a pair of blue steel bracelets in Bud's belt.

"We sail at high tide in the morning. Have Sergeant Blake aboard here in arrest! Understand?"

Bud said nothing for a bit, standing stiff at attention and staring back at Smiling Joe with eyes as hard as his own.

"Aye, aye, sir," he snapped finally, making the grand salaam.

Believe me, we looked that town over. By midnight we had things pretty much to ourselves, even the navy shore patrol having shoved off. The local police was a total loss to us except for pointing out the all-night dumps.

Towards morning all the street lamps ceased firing. We were standing in the lee of a long adobe wall and wondering what to do next when we heard somebody coming. Steaming along at about half speed was a little spig policeman, twirling his mustaches and swinging a bamboo swagger stick. He was some dude. His suit of clean whites, red chevrons with fringes, a red sash under his tunic, the big star and the two gallon sombrero told us he was a lieutenant of the *policia nacional*. He saluted with his hickory stick.

"*Buenos dias, mi sargento!*" he said to Bud. "You—ah—'ave come on beezness, not?"

"*Si, mi teniente,*" Bud said. "We look for one marine—run away from the ship—beat it. *Entiendes?*"

"Ah-h!" the *sereno* sighed, "es posseeblay you 'ave look 'een ze cantinas?"

"All of 'em," assured Bud, "but he ain't drunk. Nope. Must be in trouble. We'll get him."

"*Bueno!* Ze bes' of luck, *caballeros,*" said the spig, starting to shove. [*Continued on page 98*]

By WARWICK DEEPING

Author of "SORRELL and SON"

The NEW

IN HER panic she went part way downstairs and called: "Daddy! Daddy!"

WHEN Mary Viner and Arnold Furze met they promptly fell in love. Both had touched the depths of loneliness and discouragement; Mary at Green Shutters, a cheap little cottage in the fourth rate real estate development called Cinder Town; Arnold at Doomsday, the deserted farm he was trying to reclaim. Mary was the drudge for her family which consisted of Captain Hesketh Viner, retired army officer, and his little bird-like wife. Neither realized the utter blankness and boredom of their pretty daughter's existence, though they were pleased enough when she announced her engagement to Furze, who was not the ordinary farmer.

Arnold Furze had done his part as a captain during the World War, and Doomsday with its lovely old house and rich if neglected acres was his own. He had bought it with the last penny he had, and for five years had sweat and labored and sacrificed to rehabilitate his fields as only a true lover of the land can. And he adored Mary with all the single-mindedness of a simple nature. To afford her comforts and conveniences in the old house he planned to sacrifice the pride of the farm, Gore Woods. It hurt the farmer in Arnold to cut trees, but—anything for Mary.

Meanwhile, Mary, despite the fact that she loved Arnold and longed for respite from the deadening life at Green Shutters, was suffering panicky misgivings. Arnold was poor; marriage with him would mean going from one monotonous round of housework and drudgery to another.

But her real love for the man kept her from breaking her engagement until after an evening spent strolling over the farm with Arnold when their love reached a crisis of longing, and he showed something of the passion a man can feel for a woman. This brought Mary to a sudden realization of the irrevocability of marriage and the next morning she ran away, leaving only a note for her parents.

She went to the house of her sister, Clare Biddulph, who was married to a good-natured man, comfortably well-to-do. Both Clare and her husband sympathized with Mary's point of view, and proceeded to try to help her find herself by giving her a good time socially.

The Biddulphs were ambitious, and when they realized that Mr. Fream, owner of Hill House and the richest man in Weyfleet, was attracted by Mary's country frankness, they were delighted. And Mary was delighted too. It was true that Percival Fream was almost twice her age, but he represented the ease and beauty of which, as the Cinderella of Cinder Town, she had dreamed. She thrust aside her memory of Arnold—his tenderness and love; she stifled her sympathy for the fight she knew he was making for his farm, and on the very day that Arnold, lonely and discouraged over an especially bad run of luck, tried to cheer himself with the assurance that she surely would come back to him, Mary promised to marry Fream.

EVE

The Intimate Story of a *Girl* who Chose *Wealth* at the Cost of *Love*

CHAPTER XVI

THOUGH June had died in a blaze of heat more than three weeks ago, and rain was still denied the thirsty soil, news was drenching and plentiful. Old Hesketh, most upright of men, had to take shelter under a mental umbrella. Mary had written to say she was engaged to be married to a Mr. Percival Fream of Hill House, Weyfleet, and that the marriage was fixed for the end of September. Mr. Fream wished to see her parents. He proposed to drive her down in his car for the week-end; he could put up at The George at Carslake, and no doubt some one in Cinder Town would lend the bride-to-be a bedroom.

Old Hesketh was shocked. He sat over the breakfast table, and discussed Mary's letter with his wife.

"Nothing about Arnold, my dear, not a word!"

Mrs. Charlotte understood the reactionary impulses of human nature much better than did her man.

"After all, there was nothing settled."

"Nothing settled!"

He looked so upset about it that his wife had to go round the table and kiss him. He was such a Victorian. White was white and black was black, and a love affair was a love affair.

"My dear, doesn't she say she is very happy?" She took the letter from him, and skimmed it over a second time, holding it in both hands. "She says—'Percival is so kind and generous.'"

Hesketh filled a pipe with perturbed fingers. "The other man was that. So far as he was able. Sounds very much like shirking, my dear. I wonder if she has written to Doomsday."

Mrs. Charlotte smiled gently. "Why should she? She had told Arnold quite frankly——"

"Just six weeks or so ago. He did not regard it as final."

"But this is, Hesketh."

Her husband fumbled with his matches.

"He'll feel it. He ought to be told. I shall go and see him. He is a good fellow. This other chap—what's his name?"

"Percival."

"Percival! H'm . . ."

"Mr. Percival Fream of Hill House. He appears to be very well off."

Old Hesketh struck a match with a sound that was like "Damn him."

An unpleasant prospect, but Captain Viner had an old soldier's sense of rectitude. He advanced upon a duty as he would have advanced upon a hostile battery, very stiff in the back, convinced that to shirk a crisis was the unforgiveable sin. He put on his old Panama hat, took his ash stick from the umbrella stand, and marched off down the cinder road.

There was nobody about the house. But in the farmyard Captain Hesketh found Blossom's boy holding a saddle horse.

"Mr. Furze at home?"

"In t'cow lodge."

Old Viner paused in the doorway of the cow house. There were only two cows there, roped to the rings. Furze and Will Blossom were standing by them, while a third man, Kelly the vet, examined the udders.

ROSE was bending over the fire when Furze returned.

"Mamitis—all right. Infective form too—I'm afraid. Just these two cows?"

"So far."

"If you can manage it, keep 'em away from the others. Milk 'em last. Be careful about disinfecting your hands afterwards. Treat their milk with a disinfectant, and get rid of it where it won't spread infection."

"Right."

The three men turned. They saw Captain Hesketh, prodding the straw with his stick. He looked at Furze, and Furze's eyes seemed sunk in the brown of his face.

"Good morning. Trouble, I'm afraid?"

"Yes, trouble," said the farmer.

It was there for him in the cool gloom of the cow house, nor was he conscious of that other trouble in old Viner's eyes. Sufficient unto the moment was the evil thereof. His face had a dark thoughtfulness. He came out into the sunlight, and looked back at the straw.

"I'll be free in a minute, sir. Go in, won't you? Or have a look at the garden. It's rather burnt up, I'm afraid. I haven't much time."

Old Viner, pottering off on those long legs of his into Mrs. Damaris's sunk garden, felt himself going into action at an unpropitious moment. He was sorry for Furze, more sorry than he had expected to be. The lad's cows were sick. Yes, life was like that; troubles come to you tied up in a bunch. But there was a wrongness about the situation. If Mary had cared——

"Sorry to keep you, sir."

Furze had come down into the garden where the plantains were the only green things in the dried-up grass. The flowers of June were over, spread for a lover's occasion, and now gone to seed.

"We have had a letter from my daughter, my dear fellow."

"Mary is coming back?"

"No. She writes to say that she is going to be married. I thought you ought to be told. I'm sorry about it."

CAPTAIN HESKETH returned to Green Shutters looking hot and unhappy. Questioned by his wife as to how Furze had taken the news, he had the air of a man with nothing to communicate.

"What did Arnold say?"

"He asked who the man was. Took the shot standing, my dear. I'm sorry about it."

"So am I," said his wife. "Poor Arnold. But Mary is not made for that life. I think it is better as it is."

Old Viner betrayed a sudden and unusual peevishness.

"Oh, no doubt. But there are different ways of doing things, my dear."

Furze had said nothing, for there was nothing to be said. Old Viner had gone off rather hurriedly. And feeling a curious numbness within him Furze had taken a hoe and gone up to the Sea Field where the beets stood out in green tufts against the baked and cloddy soil. He wanted to be alone.

He hoed a row, working mechanically, a solitary figure under a cloudless sky, but the work irked him. And presently he paused and leaning on his hoe, looked out over the landscape. The woods were a heavy green. He could see a strip of hazy gray sea in the distance. The parched fields seemed to crackle in the sunlight, and the yellowy meadows looked sore and starved. Five years of sweat, and then—this!

But what of it? Was he going to whimper because a girl had gone elsewhere for her kisses, and because his kisses were like those fields, poor and distressed? Oh damn sentiment! And damn these clods! Why didn't it rain?

There was sweat in his eyes, or was it something else? He paused savagely, and looked up at the cool shade under the great green cliffs of Beech Ho. Shade, ease—no sweating in the sun!

But, by God, that was the bitterness of it. She had not only humiliated him; she had humiliated his job. She had taken his life's work, and thrown it back at him like some green, pulpy, rank smelling cabbage. She had put her pretty feet upon the few little flowers he had tried to grow for her. She had let him spend that money. And next winter those oaks in Gore Wood would have to fall.

"Damn her," he thought, "she might have left me my pride."

CHAPTER XVII

MR. PERCIVAL FREAM brought his royal blue monster of a car to rest outside the gate of Green Shutters. Beside him in a little, cherry-colored hat and a biscuit-colored coat Mary smiled, for smiles were necessary.

"Here we are. The white gate."

She was sorry to have to feel ashamed of Cinder Town, both sorry and glad, for provided that her grandee was not too much ashamed of it her own realization of its meanness did not matter.

"I think I'll turn her before we get out."

"Will you? Oh, there's daddy."

She waved a hand. But her father did not respond. He stood in the middle of the weedy little path, an affectionate rigid figure. So this was the man who was to marry his daughter, and this was his car. It was a very big car, and its brightness made old Viner feel moved to blink. A car like this was seldom seen in Cinder Town.

Fream was a bad driver, and the cinder track was very narrow. The big car jerked backwards and forward's, and hit the Vachell's fence. Two or three palings cracked, and Mary, with hands clasped together, emitted a faint "Oh!"

Fream said nothing. Mary thought his silence admirable, the silence of self restraint. But she did wish that he had made Phoebus show his paces a little more gracefully. She

YET Mary was to see her lover. As they passed the Six Pines Furze stood leaning against one of the trees.

Drawing by Arthur Litle

Before the trouble old Viner found within, the trouble in his own eyes passed unnoticed.

had christened this awe-inspiring blue car Phoebus.

"Have to pay for that fence. Much damage?"

She turned to look. "Nothing much."

She slipped out before the process of turning the car was complete, and went and kissed her father. He patted the middle of her back.

"Well, my dear."

Fream was standing in the gateway, and she brought the two men together.

"How d'you do."

"Glad to meet you, sir."

They shook hands, and seemed to be looking about for something else to say to each other, and Mary had to exert herself and carry the conversation for both of them. She showed less confidence when she met her mother and Cousin Nelly, and they were all crowded in that poky little room.

"Your room is all ready, Mary."

This from Cousin Nelly, that most kind and efficient soul.

"Oh, thank you, Nelly. But I am turning you out."

"I have a room at the Twists."

"And my suit case. I left it in the back of the car."

It was Nelly who fetched it for her and carried it upstairs while Fream and the two older people sat and looked at each other and said quite meaningless things. Mary closed the door of her little room. What a tank it was; hot and stuffy, and yet full of the old perfume of vivid emotions. She went to the window, and the beeches of Doomsday assailed her like a huge and distant cloud. She paled a little.

"Oh, Arnold!"

She was conscious of terror, a nameless fear. She drew the blind half down, and sat on the bed, staring at her suitcase.

Did he know? Supposing he came? Oh, she could not see him; she could not possibly see him. One of her panic moods arrived. She went part way down the stairs and called.

"Daddy—daddy. I want to speak to you a minute!"

He heard and came up with eyes that still seemed to be avoiding her wet face.

"Daddy—he won't come here—will he?"

Old Viner shook his head.

"Well, I told him, my dear."

She was voiceless, and he turned away and she went into her room to close the door and sit on the bed with her face between her hands.

She was afraid. She felt she dared not leave Green Shutters or its garden until Fream's car should carry her away late in the afternoon on Sunday.

No; she did not want to see any of these people, the Twists or the Perrivales or poor Coode. She wanted to forget them all. And she had felt so triumphant! But she found that her Winged Victory was a little unsteady on its feet.

Sudden anger possessed him and he threw the pink luster piece by piece out the open window.

That short week-end puzzled Fream considerably. Very properly he tried to talk money to old Viner, and was surprised to meet in Mary's father an apparent obtuseness, a seeming lack of interest. Mary was to be a rich man's wife, secure and comfortable, but the old campaigner's eyes remained dull. Fream got on better with Mrs. Charlotte, perhaps because she did nearly all the talking. But Mary was the most baffling of them, and yet she gave him something that was almost a thrill.

She chose to sit all day in the garden at the back of Green Shutters. He was made to stretch his long, stiff, awkward body in the only deck-chair, while she occupied an old basket thing dragged out of the house. Breakfast at George Inn had not agreed with him very well, nor had The George bed. He felt that he wanted exercise, a little Arcadian seclusion, a field path and a pretty creature near his arm. His! Another possession, and yet not quite possessed as yet. He was not a little afraid of his powers of possession. He was so rusty, so awkward.

"We ought to see something of the country." He was facetious. "Look for mushrooms or blackberries—or something."

She had a mysterious headache. "I'd much rather sit here with you, Val."

"Would you?"

"Yes, it's so restful."

He appeared to be trying to say something, but the right echo would not come.

Mary was in a fever to get away. She stroked the head of the silver mascot on Phoebus's radiator when the big blue car stood waiting. She climbed in after the family kisses, flushed and breathing quickly.

"Oh, I'm glad."

She sat a little more closely.

"This place makes me sad, Val."

He found a smile, and a thin elbow that transmitted a nudge of tenderness.

"Well, it needn't. Take my word for it."

Yet, she was to see her lover, for Fream chose to drive back through Carslake and strike the London road,

Downstairs Leslie had opened a bottle of champagne.

and as they passed the mouth of the lane where the Six Pines stood upon the green mound, some impulse made Mary look up.

He was standing there, leaning against one of the trees. Their eyes met, and into hers a little flicker of fear leapt instantly. But Furze's eyes seemed to her quite expressionless, two dark circles in a tanned face just glooming at her from under the pines.

She shivered and drew away into her corner. It was as though Doomsday itself had looked at her with fatal and tragic meaning.

CHAPTER XVIII

IN AUGUST, when Furze was still fighting the drought, Mary was preparing her trousseau.

The marriage had been postponed until early in October, for her grandee had some financial affair in the process of flotation, and already she had discovered that when he was pursuing the golden hind it was unwise to come between him and the pursuit. The discovery did not worry her. She was in no hurry. This was no haycock affair. Her great man extended to her a Spanish courtesy, and an air of high financial endeavor. She accepted his kisses; they could not be called disturbing kisses, and she could not quite make up her mind as to their nature. He kissed her as though he were taking a tentative nibble at strange fruit, not feeling sure of its ripeness or of his own capacity to digest it. She added an imagined shyness to her conception of his silent strength, and it did not displease her.

"The best dressed woman in Weyfleet; that's the idea."

He became articulate for the moment, standing very stiff and straight, and holding a new check book as a self-conscious man holds an overful teacup.

"Opened an account for you at the local bank. Need not bother your people."

She kissed him. "Val, you are a dear. But you ought not to do this before we are married." He looked pleased. Where was the difference? She was the prettiest thing on the Hills, and she was going to be the smartest. How generous he was! He had given her the most gorgeous ring, and pearls that must have cost him a thousand pounds. She was in heaven, but she had the sense to lean upon her sister. Clare selected her sister's wardrobe, and Mary, accepting domination, was like an excited child out Christmas shopping.

"Isn't he generous!"

Clare allowed Fream his generosity, but she was searching for the promptings behind it. It did not satisfy her to explain it too easily, nor to see in it mere amorous excitement. Clare knitted her mental brows over the phenomenon. She was inclined to reduce Fream's generosity to a form of self expression, perhaps his one and only method of self expression. He was articulate—like a check book. Hence—she gave her sister little hints.

"Every man has his particular vanity."

"I'm sure Val is not at all vain."

"Every man. I am not being cynical. Cultivate it. It's your business."

"But that sounds so——"

"Not a bit of it. If marriage is worth while, the man is worth while. If he wants you to be smart, obviously—be smart. Your man is ambitious."

"Yes—I suppose he is——"

"Power—you know. Power and its expression. You may have to express yourself with things, if you can't write books or paint pictures. Fream paints pictures."

The brown eyes of Mary questioned her.

"Does he? I didn't know——"

"His environment, Hill House, motor cars, bathrooms, wine—you . . ."

Mary looked thoughtful, and [*Continued on page 83*]

"That's one waya beating the income tax," said Hen Dall, counting the Gallupi children.

A Long Life

—"But if y'wanna live ferever," says THE

"GAZA!" cried an operatic barytone, half smothered under a flivverload of children. The snub-nosed car shied as if frightened at the red pump, and a very little girl, her mouth oozing brown candy juice, fell out. Two larger children scrambled down to the rescue, but Cosimo Gallupi—by vocation a hair-dresser, by destiny a parent—merely mopped his brow. The car was still uncomfortably full of little Gallupis, and as to Cosimo, his immediate need was for gas.

"Hello, Galloop!" said Hen Dall, slowly coming out from behind a sporting page. "Yotta git a truck fer a family like that. Howja check 'em up? Sure ya didn't spill a coupla small ones?"

"By gol!" Cosimo threw away his hat and clutched at his savage pompadour, "lilla Bianca is no here! Where is lilla Bianca?"

"She stayed home to help Ma," a fifteen-year-old boy reminded him.

"Sure. Dassa right." Cosimo began to beam. "My wife she gotta new babe yestday. Dassa right." He counted carefully. "Twelve here. Two dere. Dassa right."

"Easy come, easy go," mused Hen Dall, directing the feeble-minded Rollo to pump Mr. Gallupi his portion of gasoline. "Yessir, the more ya got the more ya want, says Hen Ford. Hen Ford's gotta invention now so's he can shovel iron inta one enda the factory and turn out the finished product, forty-five atta time."

"Dassa too many," objected Cosimo with a worried look at six of his youngest who had bounced into the road and were making mud pies all over their white holiday frocks.

"That's one waya beating the income tax, anyhow," said Hen, counting the Gallupis with a certain admiration. "Where ya takin' 'em to?"

"Ah!" Cosimo was ecstatic. "My grandma momma gotta da birthday. She a hondred and two year dissa morn."

"Looka here, Galoop. Ya talk such funny grammar I can't git halfya say. Bout how old is yer grandma momma?"

"A hondred and two."

"Life's uncertain," remarked Hen Dall, "but when a person gits past ninety they're usually outa danger. Now looka here, Galoop. I'm gonna tellya a hard word ya can use next time ya're puttin' a shingle bob onta one of them college goils. Longevility. Git the word? Lon-ge-vil-ity. That's the art of gittin' old so slow that finly ya git yer name in the papers and a lotta doctors come ta see ya and ast, 'Galoop, to what do ya owe yer extreme old age to?' And if ya still got sense enough to talk ya says, 'Since I was nine years old I never failed to drink a gallon of

"The shoffer thought the boss was developing a lotta power."

HEN wondered if Cosimo would remember to come back for the smallest Gallupi.

By WALLACE IRWIN

GAS MAN and a Scrappy One

"ya gotta play a safe game."

"Suppose I gotta chorus goil's leg on me right side and a prohibition officer's eye on me left!"

whiskey before breakfast and vote the Republican ticket.'

"Now, Longevility ain't jest gittin' old, I mean. You've heard o' them fellers that has ther hair turn white overnight after shootin' craps with a Kentuckian and other business worries. That ain't Longevility. That's jest nervousness. Ya gotta keep a stop watch on a person's age, too, ta make it count. Now lookit Japonica—she's me wife; I call 'er Jap to git 'er goat—Jap says to me often and often, 'Hen, every time ya treat me like that I git ten years older.' Then twenty minutes later I hear 'er tellin' the census man to put 'er down as thirty-six. I'll say she is.

"Y'know there's sompn about age that makes persons lie worse than explorers. Last week when my daughter Strawberry run away and married that little doughnut nibbler she tole the judge she was nineteen. And ten years from now when she goes to that same judge fer an alimony handout she'll say she's nineteen again. Time flies, they say. But with the ladies it flies both ways, backwards and forwards. After they speed up to about twenty-five they commence puttin' 'er into reverse.

"SHE told the census man to put 'er down as thirty-six."

"Now, Galoop, if yer grandma momma says she's a hundred and two, like's not she's a hundred and twenty-two. Ya gotta put on twenty years for what she took off 'bout the time she was forty-five.

"But I guess she's some old, all right. Longevility runs in families. It runs in mine. Lookit Grandpa Dall. Died at the age of a hundred 'n' seven. Natural death? Say not! Grandpa was skipper or floor-walker or whacha-call-it on one o' them schooners runnin' up to Boston. That boat was built the day Grandpa was born. She got so old and second-handed that one day the plumbin' system give out and she jest sunk in the middle of Long Island Sound. That was Grandpa's hundred an' seventh birthday. When they found his body he had swam thirty-eight 'n' three tenths miles——"

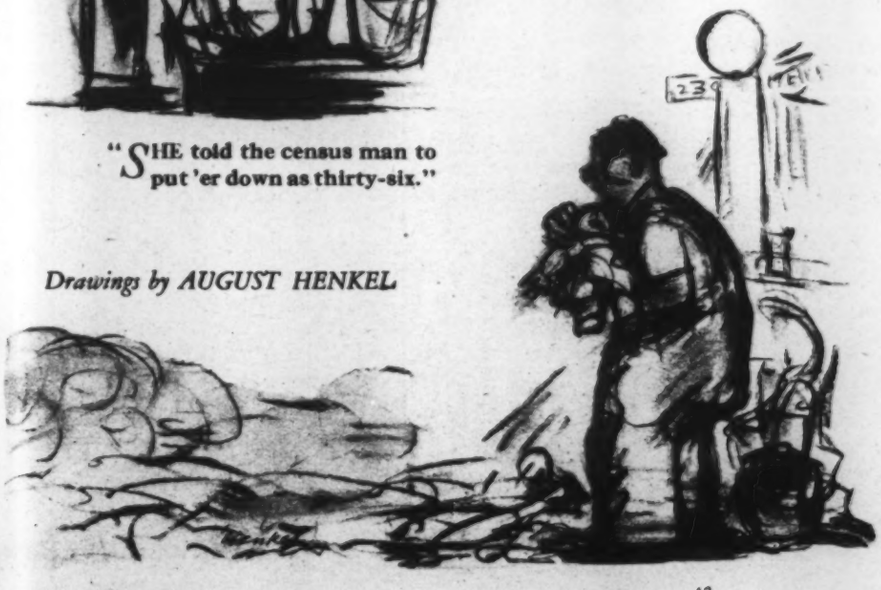
"Watta know bouta dat?" exclaimed Mr. Gallupi.

"Nothin'," said Hen Dall. "Pussitively nothin'. You and me and a lotta other scientists could study Longevility till our brains run down our backbones. Nuttin' doin'. Books can't tellya how to stay in the game after yer season ticket's run out. Lookit Methusalem. The Gospel tells us he lived to be a thousand becuz he led a upright life. Well, my cousin Jerry Hooley lived an upright life. He was a steeple-jack. At the age of twenty-six he fell off a ladder, paintin' the steeple of the First Presbyterian Church.

"John D. Rockefeller—him and me's in partnership, sellin' gas on shares—Uncle John he says the secret of old age is playin' golf. I donno nothing 'bout golf. But Doc Hall—you know that stylish pill-mechanic that comes round here in the punkin-colored sedan—he's one o' the champeens, I guess. He tole me he has made eighteen holes in 445. That's pretty good, even fer a bowling alley. Well, he tells me he gotta quit golf becuz he's afraid lightnin' 'll strike him dead some day fer the things he says to the ball. Nossir. If y' wanna live ferever ya gotta play a safe game.

"Y'know whan a old ottomobile gits a birdie in the carburater and the transmission makes a noise like a catfight on a tin roof, all y'gotta do is take 'er down an' put in some spare parts. Even then she don't go so good that yer goil's gonna talk about it. But if ya replace the engine and shassy sometimes ya can git a extra hundred [*Continued on page 122*]

Drawings by AUGUST HENKEL



A ROMANCE

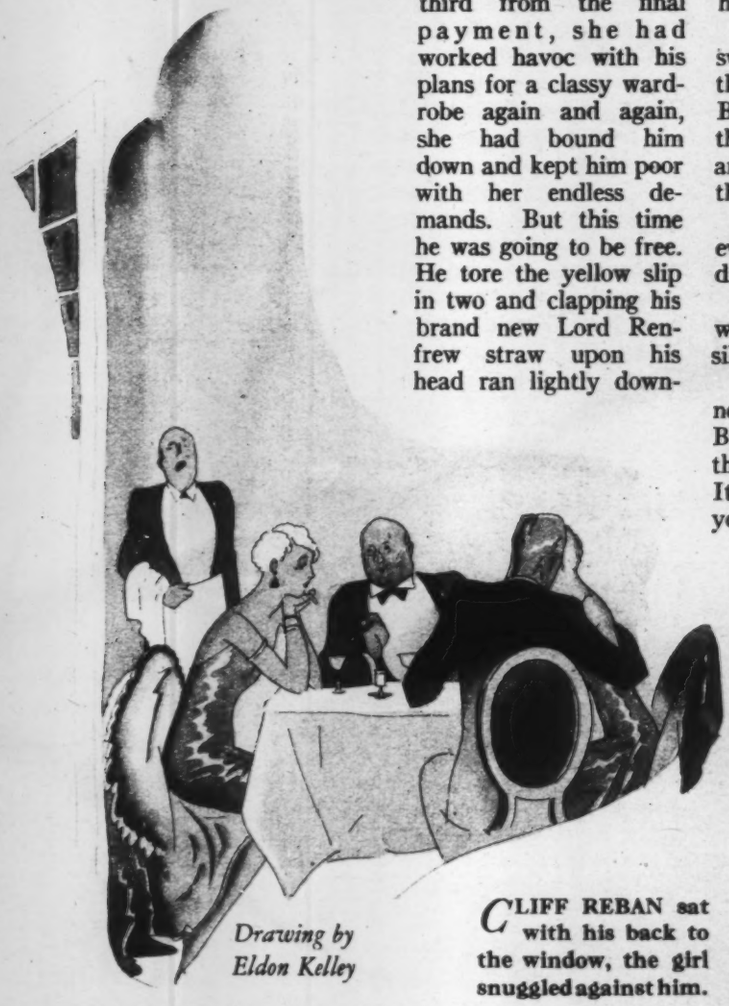
Gold Digging MOMMA

By MARY LOUISE ANAWALT

BUDDY Terrell read the telegram three times and then stuck it in the side of his mirror where he could study it, the while he buttoned himself into his snappy light gray spring suit. It was signed, "Your poor old mother." Buddy reflected bitterly that if she were so darned poor she might have saved three words, which would, of course, have robbed her message of its artistic finish.

She did not mention money in her weekly letters, depending upon the surprise element in messages by wire to produce results—money order, check, or cash wired. He had been six months paying back that last one hundred.

And now, with Cliff Reban on the show spending money like water, what sort of a chance would he have with a girl if he had to spend all his kale on a rapacious parent? Hot tears stung his eyes. He wasn't going to do it. She had parted him from a gold-plated saxophone at the third from the final payment, she had worked havoc with his plans for a classy wardrobe again and again, she had bound him down and kept him poor with her endless demands. But this time he was going to be free. He tore the yellow slip in two and clapping his brand new Lord Renfrew straw upon his head ran lightly downstairs, as if in this way he could flee responsibility.



Drawing by Eldon Kelley

CLIFF REBAN sat with his back to the window, the girl snuggled against him.

When he swung off the car near the little park theater where the Kreller Komedy Kuties company was located for the summer, he was greeted by Gay Barrett who lolled in front of the box office with the new lead.

"Hello, Prince," she said, drawing him in line with them, her cool hand clinging to his. "Where has my baby been?"

"Coming," Buddy smiled into her eyes with a gayety he did not feel. "Hold the train for me for I'm on my wa-a-hay—" They put their heads together and lifted their voices in close harmony as was their pleasant habit.

Cliff Reban, the new tenor, a large dark man verging on middle age, shifted uneasily. He always felt at a disadvantage when these two youngsters formed a combine.

"Barber shop chords are still good in Punkin Center," he said as they finished, applauding heavily.

"You said it," Gay replied, turning to take a generous swig from a bottle of soda pop that stood at her elbow on the shelf of the ticket window. "Come on," she added to Buddy, "let's punish the air again, kid." And once more the two curly-haired, dark heads were pressed together, and the air was rent with sounds of anguish that brought three of the company out front with a fire extinguisher.

Rehearsal ended in the heat of the midday sun, and every one dashed out for a bite and something cold to drink, Gay and Buddy going off together.

"This is going to be a snorter for June," Buddy said, wiping his face with a violently striped blue and white silk handkerchief.

"Yeh." Gay's thin young shoulders drooped. "I wish next week was over. I got a number called the Polar Blues that's dressed in fur. It'll be curtain for me if the thermometer gets to flirting around the boiling point. It's hot enough in that shoe box with nothing on but your make-up, and that's the truth."

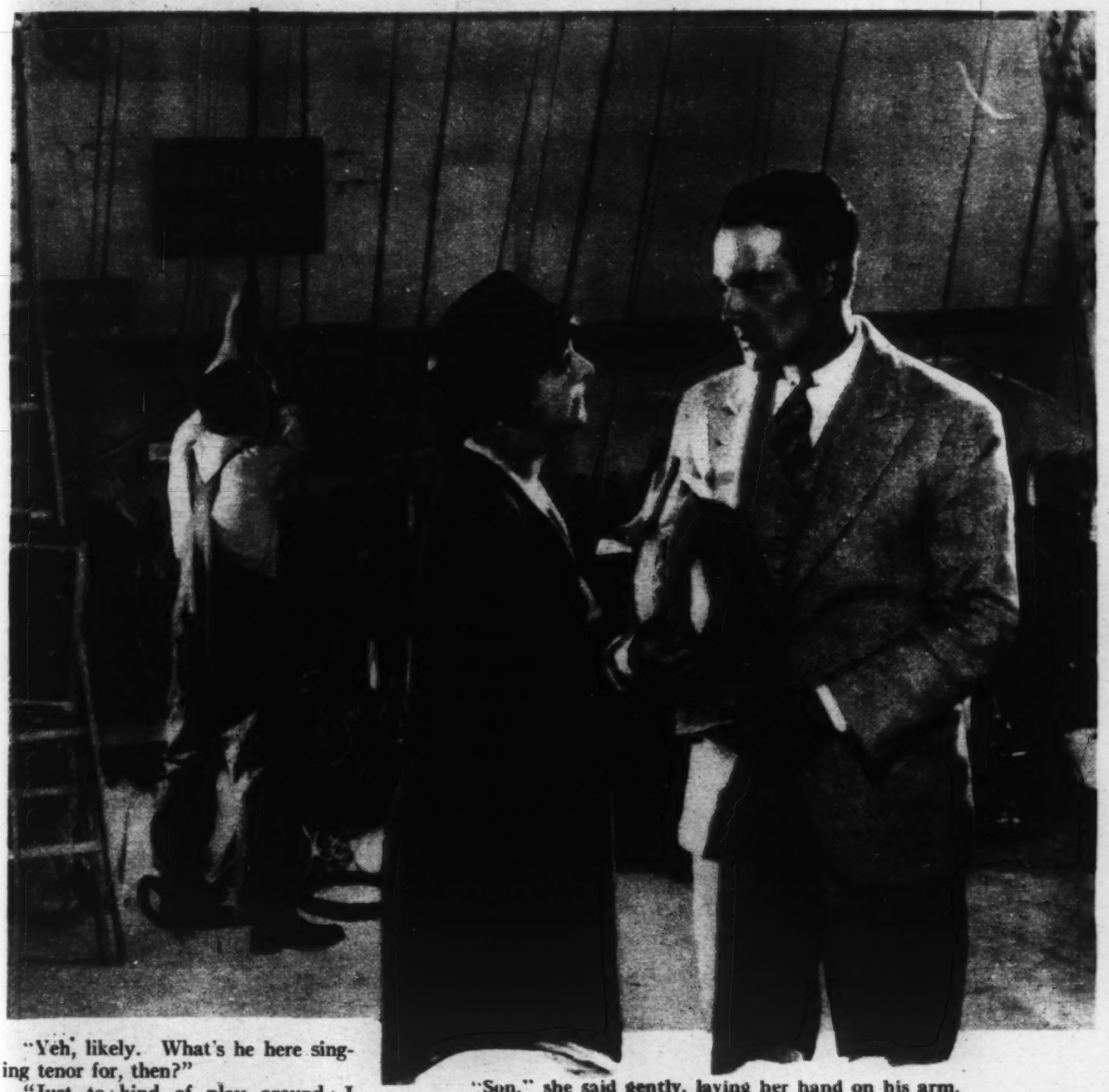
Buddy frowned. "You got to be careful, kid," he said. "You packed a bad cough nearly all winter and this ain't no way to get built up. If you only could have laid off this summer and just kind of rested . . ."

"Yeh, if," Gay laughed shortly. "I ain't no Broadway beauty, just a poor woiking goil—" and there in the park, in the shadows of the gently rustling trees, they once more gave themselves over to harmony. As they finished, the dust from a smart red roadster enveloped them and cut short the final line, "She was only a poor woiking goi-hee-el."

"That was Cliff," Gay said looking after the swinging glint of red. "He's got a classy boat and he sure steps on her."

"Where does that baby get his cash?" Buddy followed her gaze resentfully.

"Don't you know? He's half owner of the Kreller shows."



"Son," she said gently, laying her hand on his arm. Buddy looked at her uncomprehendingly.

"Yeh, likely. What's he here singing tenor for, then?"

"Just to kind of play around, I guess, and it gives him a slant on things, too. Buddy——" she hesitated.

"What?" he demanded a bit peevishly, looking down at the dust on his russet shoes.

"They're going to pull a party over Sunday down on the Island. You know, where the road-house is."

"Who is?"

"Reban and K. K. Kreller and that Susy he runs with and some of their bunch . . . and he asked me."

Buddy looked up at her quickly, tipping his hat back from his eyes. "Don't you do it, Gaytie," he said earnestly; "that's out of your line. You stick to the shore, see? It's safest."

"What's it get you? I'm tired of always playing the wise bird. I want to be coocoo once in a while. It seems like I'll dry up and blow away if I don't go on some kind of a toot." Gay stuck out a red underlip and kicked at the sod with the pointed toe of her worn kid pump.

"Well, see that there's a way to walk home before you start out," Buddy shook his head warningly.

"Oh, your grandmother's nightie," Gay replied rudely and turned away.

"Listen, girlie—" Buddy hurried after her, "how'd it be if we pulled a party? I know loads of places that ain't too far away for a Sunday ride. Quiet and cool . . . What do you say?"

"Not a word," Gay shook her head and walked on; "not a darn word."

That night she went out with Reban for supper, and Buddy, eating alone in a dairy lunch, tried not to think how far a high-powered red roadster could travel in a single night. Gay reported for rehearsal the next morning, however, as early as usual.

Buddy, off after a devastating number with the prima donna, who was thin and shrill and married to one of the Krellers, fanned himself with his rah rah boy hat and pulled up his white flannel trousers carefully before he settled down on his haunches for a short off stage wait. "Listen," he said out of the corner of his mouth to Gay, who in her character of the American millionaire's daughter wore a gown that glittered with paste diamonds, "how would a Sunday at a swell place with a jazz band and a tony crowd strike you?"

"As which?" Gay inquired non-committally.

"Golden Glade. It's about twenty miles up from here."

Gay whistled softly. "You are ritzy," she said. "Where's the dead body? Who'd you knock off to get enough dough for a place like that?"

"I'd spend my roll to see you happy, babe." Buddy got to his feet and moved to her side.

"Would you, bo?" Gay put a hand on his shoulder and then ran it gently over one cheek. "Don't you bother about little butterfly," she whispered and ran to the wings.

Buddy stood for a time in deep thought, coming out of his abstraction automatically as he made a leap in the direction of his entrance.

"Well, well, well—" he entered on this line— "so you're an American too."

"Well, well, well, yourself," Gay, as Miss Van Astorbilt, replied. "Sounds like you got the Old Oaken Bucket Blues." And this was the cue for the leader to go into the number they put over together. Buddy tightened his grasp on the thin arm linked in his and their heads came together as their voices mingled in song. They garnered a hand that would have meant an encore if any one save the leads dared take so much as a bow; and when they came off Buddy, in the shadow of the stairs, drew Gay to him until each felt the flutter of the other's heart.

Her bright hard armor of gayety cast aside, Gay wrenched herself loose and with a sobbing laugh bolted up the stairway, almost upsetting the prima donna who stood finishing a last cigaret before she went on.

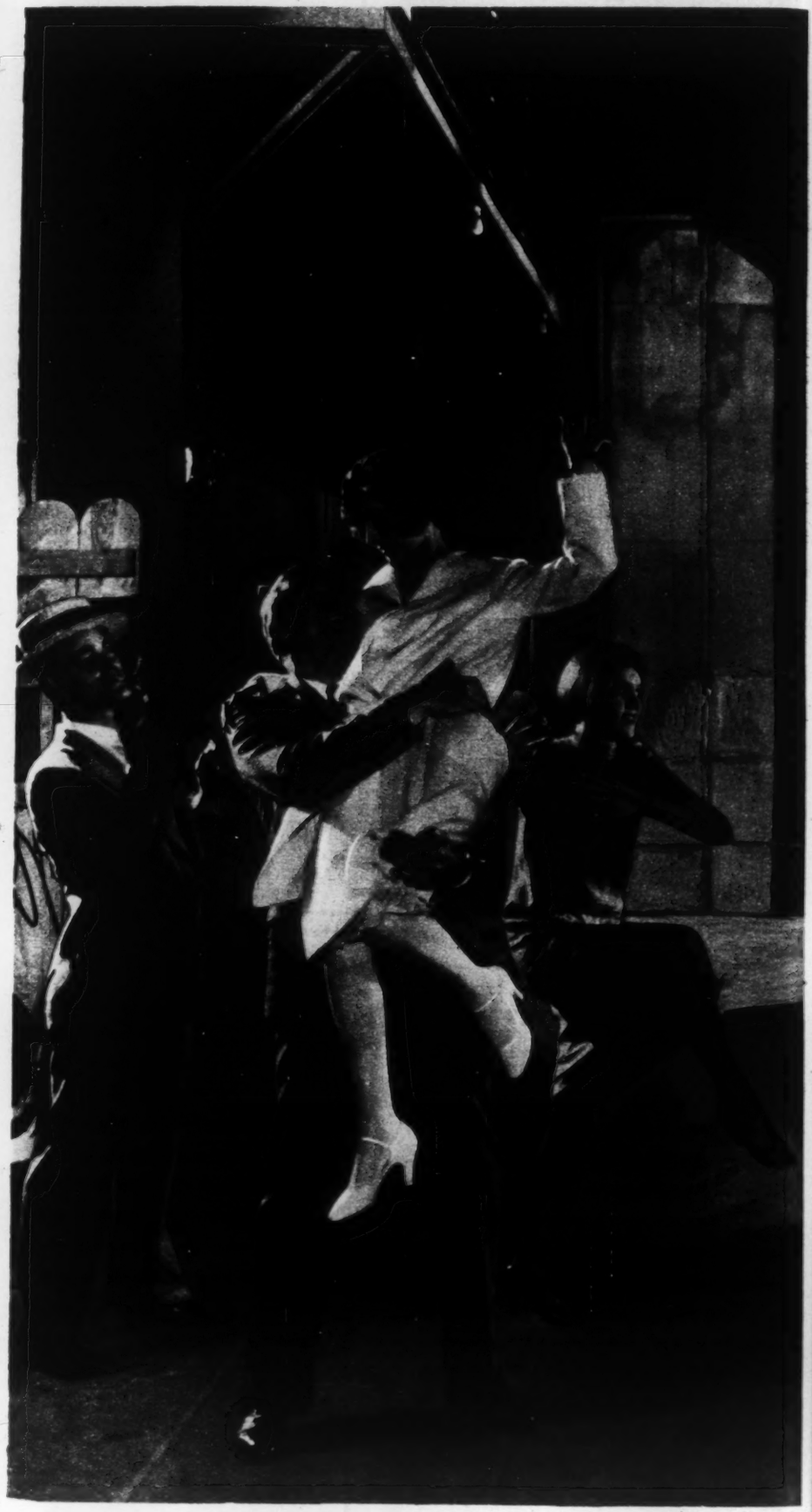
"Me and the boy friend!" She looked faintly amused.

"You tell 'em," Gay replied recklessly, pushing by and into the stifling dressing-room, ripping her glittering gown open as she went.

That night when Buddy came out and looked about the dismantled stage Gay was no place to be found. She had probably gone early with Cliff Reban. Then he saw Reban going out with the plumb soubrette in tow, and with suddenly leaping spirits he went off whistling, his hat on one side of his head.

The next morning he was awakened by a cheerful hammering at his door. It was another yellow envelope and he knew as he reached for his trousers to hunt change—for the wire had been sent collect—that it was another message from his mother. She signed it this time, "Your heart-broken old mother." Buddy threw the thing from him, and climbing into bed lay looking moodily out across the view of chimneys outside his window. He knew suddenly that he was going to have to send the money, that he had known it all along. His fight for Gay was up. He buried his face in his pillow.

He hunted K. K. Kreller as soon as he reached the park and negotiated a loan. It placed him in virtual bondage for the whole season and his independent young soul cried aloud in rebellion, but he stuffed the bills in his pocket and made his way to the nearest telegraph office.



As Buddy was leaving he saw Cliff, his face flushed, lift

Gay in his arms and carry her out to the car.

Gay, conspicuous in a brief frock of prismatic colors, hopped out of the red roadster in front of the stage entrance just as he returned.

"Hello, peaches and cream," she called. "Do you get that school girl complexion sleeping so late?"

Buddy was in no mood to be chaffed.

"Just getting back?" he asked savagely.

"Says which?" Gay paused, the laughter dying out of her eyes.

"You and—that?" Buddy jerked his head in the direction of Cliff Reban who stood conversing with K. K. K.

"You're in a dirty temper this morning, ain't you, dearie?" Gay pushed by him and went into the theater.

Later as they gathered for rehearsal Buddy tried to take her hand.

"I didn't mean nothing," he said; "I had a grouch on, I guess."

Gay jerked her hand away. "I'm no one's ball and chain that I got to take a razzing every time the coffee and cheese doesn't set right," she returned.

The rehearsal jerked along with some profanity and considerable noise, and after a hot debate a sentimental number, originally intended for the juvenile, was switched to the lead and Cliff went over to confer with the pianist. He rather fancied his voice and opened his mouth very wide so that the notes might have free play.

Buddy shot a glance at Gay. It had long been their custom to foregather in a sequestered spot and more or less libelously imitate the leads. Gay met his gaze with a chilling stare and returned to a perusal of her notes. Buddy wandered disconsolately back to his point of vantage near the piano, taking a melancholy pleasure in the fact that the tenor's mouth did look very funny when he sang.

Gay departed in the red roadster after rehearsal; Buddy heard her little shriek of laughter as Cliff swept her into the car without opening the door. He pulled his hat down over his eyes and went off alone to the dairy lunch.

The following Friday a wire reached Buddy at the theater. It said merely, "Coming on for a little visit." It was from his mother. He turned it over and over as if he might find the answer on the back. He had not seen his mother for years, he had no time for visiting—it seemed he was forever working himself out of debt. And now she was coming to see him. He stood completely stunned.

"What's wrong?" Gay, fastening the shoulder strap of her costume came up to him. "Bad news?"

"Yes," Buddy stammered. "No—no! My mother . . . she's coming on."

"Gee!" Gay looked interested, "On the show?"

"Yeh, she is coming on here for a visit or something."

"Maybe the loans ain't going out fast enough." She knew something about the continuous demands upon Buddy's salary.

"Oh, well—" Buddy shrugged his shoulders uneasily—"she's old and broke most of the time and . . ."

"And she plays you for a come [*Continued on page 92*]

The TAXI GIRL and the ORANGES

By
DOROTHY MILLER

It's a Clever Wife who Knows *when* to Deceive Her Husband

"LOOK, see, feel, smell!" she smiled, "but don't let's eat them."

IT WAS midnight when Joyce came tiptoeing into Winter Quarters.

"That," she told Dr. Jackson, when he had come to see Roland so often he seemed more like an uncle than a doctor, "is the name of our estate. Isn't it elegant? It was one of my inspirations. I have as many of them as Tommy-across-the-hall has freckles. Roland's going to make us an elegant door-plate—'Winter Quarters' in old English lettering. You won't raise your fees because we're such swanky customers?"

The doctor had smiled and Roland had laughed as they looked about the big alcove room up under the eaves of a city rooming-house. It took a girl like Joyce Winter to call a single light housekeeping room an estate, the while she made it a home.

It was midnight by the clock when she came in. But for Roland Winter it was always dawn when his wife came within the restricted range of his tired vision. He had lain facing the door all evening, watching for her. He was always watching for her, or looking yearningly after her. Always. A year he had lain so. A year is an eternity without beginning when a man must lie in bed and let his wife support him. A young man. A younger wife. She was a bride on her honeymoon when the accident had happened. It was just his legs. He felt well now. He'd get up again. The doctor swore he would recover. In time. But—God, to be so helpless!

"Hullo, darling," said Roland Winter in a quiet, cheery voice. However much he rebelled against his fate, he didn't add tonnage to the burden he was on Joyce's shoulders by acting the querulous invalid. "You needn't creep in like a popular flapper, dearest. I'm awake."

"Bad boy!" cried Joyce, running over to him. "You oughtn't to be."

She pounced lightly upon him. He held her close as she perched on the edge of the bed, in the dark that had been full of ominous forebodings, and was no longer.

"Joyce. My litle Joyce."

"Roly, I love you so! Now, see."

She broke away from his arms, and turned on the cheap little bedside lamp.

"Look, see, feel, smell! You shall even taste, in the morning. One—two—three—four—five—six oranges for the dish! Wait'll I get it."

"Six whole oranges! What abundance."

Joyce came back from the center table, that was whatever sort of table the occasion required, bearing a green glass bowl. Collecting the oranges, she piled them into it.

"Oranges in the dish again!" she sighed relievedly. "Roly, you've no idea what a psychological difference it makes to me whether this dish is empty or full."

"It does me, too. I've caught it from you, Joyce."

Herkimer took up the caricature and regarded his likeness without a smile.

"Have you? They do say kisses are germy, catchy things. But who's afraid?"

Roland demonstrated that he wasn't.

"It's like this—" Joyce went on when she was at leisure. "Stop me if you've heard this before."

"I have," said Roland, "at least a dozen times."

"Then you can stand hearing it again. I'm going to tell it different, anyhow. Six oranges in the dish, and we're rich—rich as the Fords. Five, we're prosperous. Four, we're well-to-do. Three, we're making both ends meet. Two, we're hard up. One, we're broke. None at all, and we're clients of the Helping Hand. That's how it is with me. And with you, Roly?"

"The same, with variations. When the dish is full, you're a wealthy working woman able to afford the luxury of a handsome husband temporarily confined to his bed."

"I'm always that!"

"When it's empty, you're a poor little kid with a no-'count hulk of a sick hound strapped to your back who—"

"Hush, hush, hush! If that's how you feel when it's empty I'll never let it be empty again. Never!"

Joyce slipped to her feet, and crossed the room to replace the fruit bowl on the utility table. Because their thoughts were on other things, she and Roland had discussed its contents at length. But they couldn't go on talking about the psychological effects of oranges all night.

"Well," said Roland, smoothing the sheet across his chest as he stared at Joyce in the blue dancing frock that was part of her trousseau—though she had never danced in it before that evening—"well, how was the party, little taxi girl?"

"Oh, Roly, do you mind so much? It wasn't bad, really it wasn't."

She was kneeling beside him, careless of her laces.

"The girls, you know—they're just girls, trying to get along. And the men weren't a bad sort, really. They

were fat, some of them, and awkward. Some of them were nice, though. They were all just lonely men. They didn't get fresh." Roland could not help closing his eyes, and she talked faster. "I just pretended it was like it was during the war, you know, when I used to dance with the soldiers. If I could dance with strange men for my country I could dance with the Kaiser himself for *you,* darling!"

"To think," said Roland Winter, holding her hands very tight, "to think of what you've had to do to take care of me—when I meant to take care of you. My little wife—a theater usher. My little wife—a waitress. My little wife—a taxi girl. Dancing with all comers in a public dance hall at a dime a dance. Joyce, Joyce!"

"But I didn't usher long; the management saw to that by going under. And I'm not a waitress since I lost my job last week, Roly. And if I hadn't been one I shouldn't have known Pearl, the Chewing-gum Champion, and she wouldn't have suggested this lucrative profession to me, and I wouldn't have had this chance to bring home the bacon—I mean the oranges! Look at the money I've made this one evening, and I didn't stay late either!"

"I should have had more money in the bank when I married you. An advertising salesman's income is likely to stop if he's laid up too long."

"But the last thing in the world, Roly, you could have foreseen is that you'd be in an auto accident. And have to stand the terrific cost of surgeons and hospitals. You should have married a woman who knew how to make a living instead of a simp who makes a specialty of failing at everything."

"*You* fail? Haven't you kept us going here, the Lord only knows how, ever since I was chucked out of the hospital? You'd had trouble enough before you got me, too."

Joyce buried her face in the covers a moment; for her father had died a few months before she met Roland, leaving her next to nothing to live on. Neither she nor Roly had any family.

"You're all I've got," she remarked as she lifted her head and rose slowly to her feet. "What could I do without you, Roly? You'll soon be your strong, well self, dear."

"When I am," said Roland Winter, "I'll make all this up to you, darling."

"To be sure!" cried Joyce, clothing her spirit in gaiety again as she began to undress. "Tenfold! And now you must listen to the jolly adventure I've had, which is going to make us still yet more money. Who do you think I danced with?"

"Every man who saw you and could."

"With Scott Herkimer!"

"A friend of ours?"

"A patron. You know Scott Herkimer, Roly!"

"Oh, intimately."

"Herkimer, the artist, ignoramus. He wants to paint me!"

"Why gild the lily?"

"Why not, if you pay her well for the privilege? I'm to go to his studio to sit for him tomorrow—today, it is. He says I'm a type he's been looking for."

"That's nothing new. I said the same thing. Only I called you my ideal."

"You precious lover!" said Joyce, beginning to open windows. "Aren't we lucky to have a mansion with two exposures? And Roly—just when the night looks blackest—have you ever noticed you can begin to see through it?"

"Yes," said Roland, who could see nothing but Joyce and his despair, "oh, yes, we'll see our way clear yet. I'll be up soon, Dr. Jackson says."

"Of course you will! And I'm going to make money dancing. And letting Herkimer do my face. Such easy, ladylike ways to keep the wolf from the door."

"And oranges in the dish," added Roland.

He lay awake much longer, looking at them and other hidden things, while Joyce slept wearily.

The day that followed was lovely. Joyce busied herself gaily about the little tasks that are native to housekeeping, however light it is. Roland's dark-shadowed eyes followed her about the room with wistful pride. Breakfast was a gala event; for with their toast and coffee, prepared over a single burner gas plate, they had oranges again, a whole one apiece. When people have economized on oranges for a week, such an addition to a plain and insufficient meal is a treat. Room rent must be met, drug store bills paid, doctor's accounts must be partially settled, at least. The only way those of too limited means can cut down their expenses is by cutting down their appetites. It is not a pleasant way. But the Winters had learned it.

When the dishes had been washed, in water carried in from the public sink down the long hall, when they had been put away on the two shelves behind faded cretonne curtains; when the floor had been mopped with an old shirt pinned around the broom, and the mismated furniture and Joyce's few bright treasures had been dusted with care—when Roland had been made comfortable—it was time for lunch. After the two of them had partaken of their milk and crackers and eggs, Joyce washed the dishes again and dressed her pretty dark-haired, brown-eyed self for her appointment with Scott Herkimer.

"You look sweet enough to eat," said Roland hungrily.

"Do I? Do you honestly think I'm pretty enough for an artist's model?"

"Pretty enough for anything."

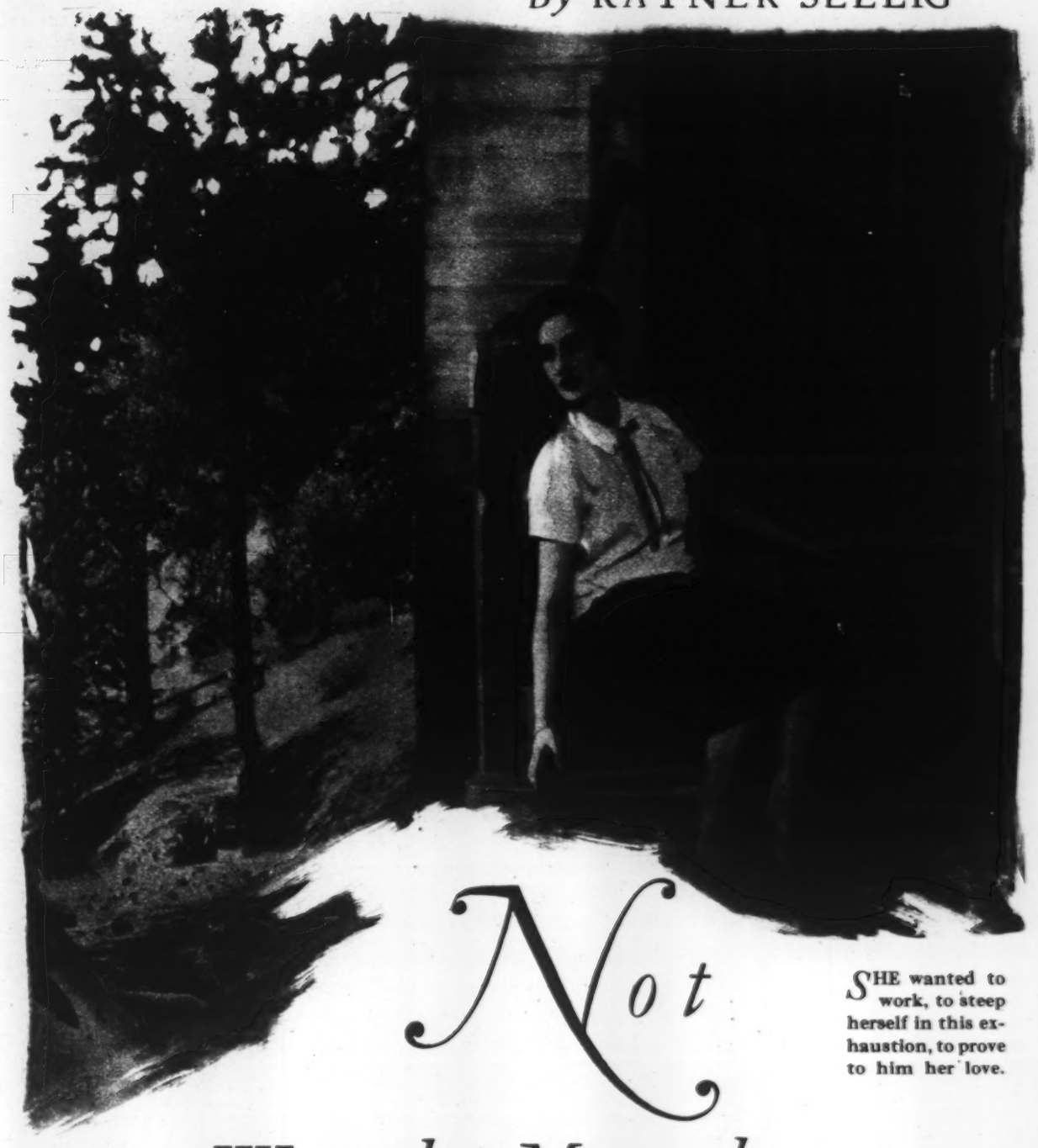
"Then perhaps I can make lots of money posing. Hooray! Roly, shall I tell Tommy-across-the-hall he can come in and stay with you now? His mother's left him alone again, and he's sitting on the stairs looking forlorn."

"Bless him, yes. I don't know whether you ought to pay him for being my nurse or his mother ought to pay me for being his. That's an idea worthy of you, Joyce." Roland elaborated upon it as he lit a cigaret. "Run an ad in the paper — 'Children entertained by the hour by a competent male nurse-maid at unreasonable rates.' I wouldn't have to draw any more funny pictures for a dozen kids than I do for Tommy. All I'd need would be a tidy lace cap on my head. That's about my speed as a provider, looks [*Continued on page 105*]

Drawing by Robert Orr

"DANCING with all comers in a public hall at a dime a dance!"

By RAYNER SEELIG



SHE wanted to work, to steep herself in this exhaustion, to prove to him her love.

Not Worth Murder

She Possessed Everything in the World —Except a Heart

DAVERDANA could not fall in love.

She had a few score, perhaps a hundred admirers. When she came into a room men flocked about her as bees about a highly perfumed flower. Out of the many who sought her, Daverdana had selected two.

But she could not fall in love. She liked both her suitors, and she enjoyed playing one against the other, yet she could not decide between them.

There was Miles Cabot, slim, black of hair, sleek, and witty, and diplomatic. His admiration showed in his attention to every word she spoke, in the sophistication of the flowers and perfumes that he sent her. Cabot embellished a drawing room like a lacquered pot filled with flowers of jade and coral. All his gestures were harmonious. He was the epitome of aristocracy.

Nils Eriksen was a saga of the Northland. His hair was yellow, his eyes were blue like the shadowy snow on distant mountain tops. His waist was like a thin steel column; his shoulders were wide. He had the head of a Michelangelo statue. He loved and hated with the cold violence of northern people. He made love to Daverdana as he would have wielded a battering ram. Yet when Daverdana teased him his eyes grew narrow with pain. Once when she laughed at him, Miles Cabot murmured:

"Daverdana, I don't believe you have a heart."

"Of course I have a heart," she answered. "I wouldn't be alive if I hadn't. And indeed I am alive . . ." As if to illustrate her words she sprang up, did a swift pirouette, with her white arms stretched straight up, and her short copper hair standing on end like a cock's crest. She dropped back into her chair. "But my heart must be conquered. It must be won. I should like to be in love, but you must make me want to give, one of you."

This went on for weeks. Two suitors remained. Daverdana could not choose between them.

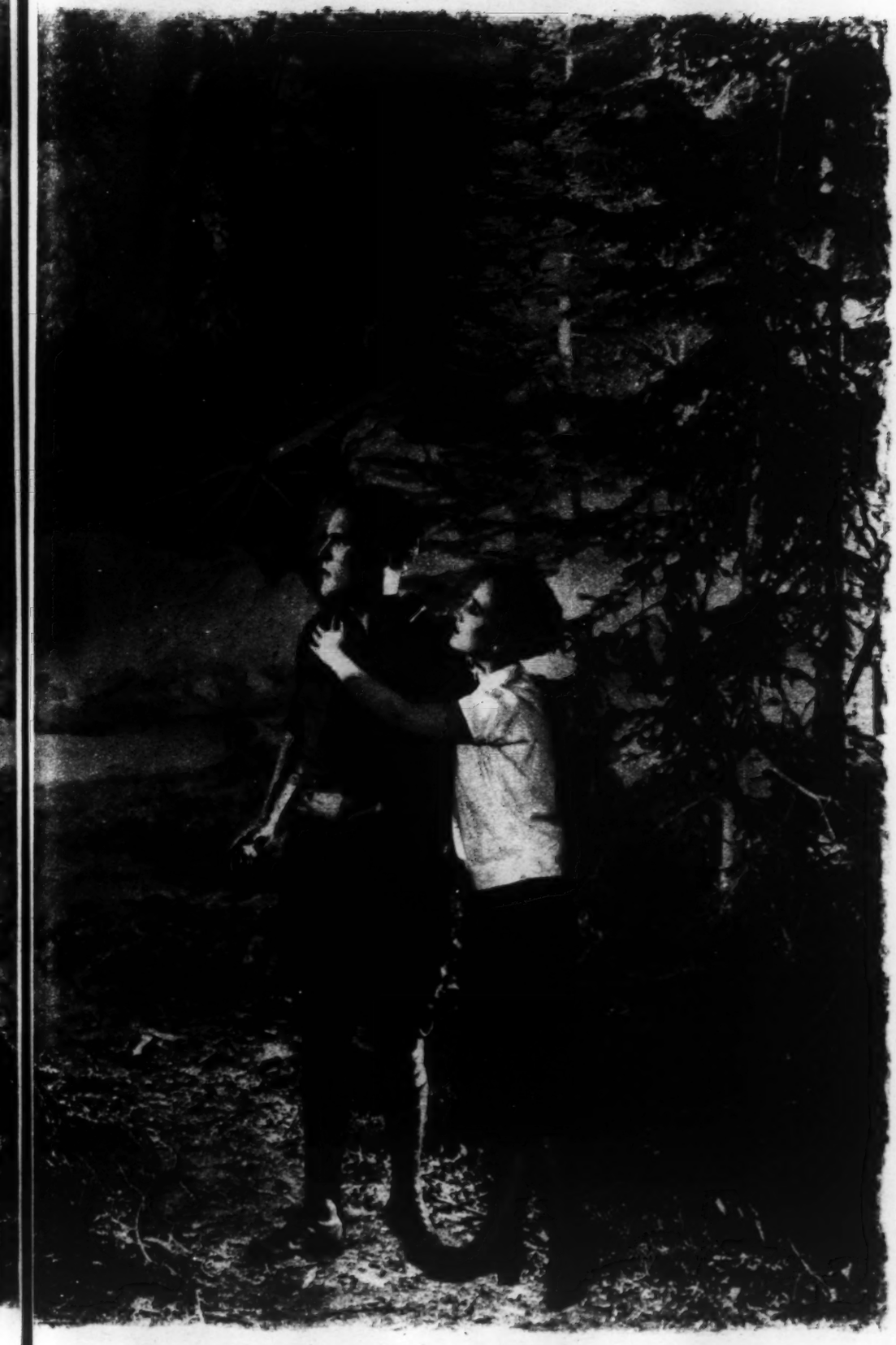
Daverdana turned to him, her soft eyes glittering. "You shan't turn me

DAVERDANA was a flirt, a coquette. a siren. But there was nothing vulgar about her. Although she dressed exquisitely, in the latest and most extravagant style, she was not modern. The smell of cigarets on the breath of a woman offended her; she never danced in crowded night clubs. When she left her house to have luncheon at Louis', she drove in a carriage pulled by two polished brown horses and there were two men on the box. When she stepped out, her oval face showing above a wrap of sable, people stared and stood back. She was like a queen.

Although she was an orphan and wealthy, she had no wish for the freedom of living alone. Three aunts lived with her. Two maiden ladies and a widow, who moved quietly about the big house like fat gray cats. It was Daverdana's palace, and she had a wing to herself. When the door of her bedroom was closed, she was alone with her vanity, and free. But she was not happy. She longed to find a Prince Charming among her admirers. She longed to offer up her heart on an altar. She longed to fall in love!

Alone, she reveled in her perfection before her mirror. She watched herself as she turned taps and ran water into the black marble tub. She bent down, stretching her muscles and enjoying the strain when she lifted a great Lalique bowl and tipped it, pouring scented crystals into the water. The bowl was heavy; she staggered when she carried it back to its shelf. After that it was heavenly to relax into the tepid bath.

Suddenly a little clock chimed. Daverdana awakened from feminine reveries and jumped out of the tub. She stood before the mirror, smooth-fleshed, covered with little rolling drops of scented water. She turned this way and that, looking at herself. She had so much to give, if



out. You shan't." She clung to him. "I'm going to stay."

only there were a man who could stir in her the will to give.

She seized a rough towel and rubbed her skin until it reddened, until fine pin pricks of delicious warmth tingled everywhere. Then she cooled herself with soft white powder. She put her pink feet into little mules of purple leather with enameled straps. On the left strap there was a mask of tragedy; a mask of comedy on the right.

She went into the bedroom, where the walls were lined with pale yellow satin. The lights were strong and very white. Daverdana was not afraid of light. She was not at all afraid of honesty.

She put on gossamer thin stockings and copper slippers, with silver heels like pointed stilts. She drew on a white chemise laid in infinitesimal plaits. No embroidery, no lace; over her heart her name "Daverdana," in tiny letters embroidered with white silk. Her Vionnet dress was of white satin, alarmingly simple. She wore no jewels. She was an artist. She knew that she was ornament enough. She used scarcely any cosmetics. Only powder—a little too yellow for her skin, perhaps, but it brightened the gloss of her red hair, which was combed back smoothly behind her ears, and then allowed to bush out, like a Spanish dancer's. Just a touch of palest pink salve on her lips, and she was ready.

She took a fan of white feathers set in a handle of copper encrusted with amethysts, and went out. Nils Eriksen was waiting downstairs, standing in the center of the drawing room and rumpling his blond mane impatiently.

Daverdana came in. "I could kill you for being so beautiful," he said.

She only smiled, saying: "Shall we go in to dinner?"

AFTERWARDS they went to a small room with walls lacquered black and gold. On the table were coffee and a bottle of old Benedictine. There were five tiny goblets of Venetian glass, long-stemmed, clustered about the bottle.

Nils Eriksen stood next to the mantle, one foot on the fender. His face was flushed with the wine he had taken freely at dinner. Now as he accepted a liqueur the tiny goblet looked absurd in his hand. If he tightened his fingers one bit the delicate stem would snap.

Daverdana, at ease in a chair upholstered with leopard's fur, watched him curiously but without anxiety. She was wondering whether the stem would break.

The three cat aunts were restless. They, too, thought

it time for Daverdana to pick a husband; time for Daverdana to make up her mind. Aunt Helen, the fattest and softest of the three, thought she would get her knitting. Aunt Charity thought it more pleasant in the drawing-room. They went out, one after another, moving and smiling silently.

The stem of the glass Nils was holding broke at last.

Daverdana sighed with relief, saying: "Too bad. It spoils the set."

Nils, his skin flaming with embarrassment, wondered what to do with the fragments. In the end with a sort of desperate violence he flung them onto the stone hearth; they splintered with a delicious tinkling as of small bells.

He turned on Daverdana.

"I won't stand it another day. It has to end. Say you will have me or send me away."

"You're free to go. I've told you so before."

"I'm not free until you set me free. You know. Will you say you can never love me?"

Daverdana looked at him with pleasure. His hair was so crisp and golden; his eyes were set so widely; there was such glorious strength in him.

"It wouldn't be true," she whispered.

"Marry me then. I will make you love me!" He stood with his feet apart, his head thrust forward; he was the warrior rather than the lover. "Do I look like a weakling? Give yourself to me and trust me to hold you."

"I will not marry you without loving you. But go if it hurts you."

"I will only come back. I adore you."

Daverdana raised her slim shoulders ever so slightly.

"You are insatiable," flamed Nils. "What do you want? Don't you believe in my devotion?"

"But it isn't enough, Nils. I must love you in return."

He took a step towards her. "Sometimes I think you are a bloodless thing. A thing of darkness, like a vampire. But you are white, so white—— What do you want?"

"I don't know," said Daverdana sadly. "I think I want to feel. Perhaps I am the princess in the fairy tale, whose heart was stolen by a yellow hag, who kept it in a glass box. Take your coffee, Nils."

"Coffee! Coffee!"

"Come now, Nils, you are too dramatic."

"I'm going. If I stayed I should take you by force. Not for my love of you, but for the joy of subduing you."

"Don't go yet. Miles will be here in a moment."

"Then I will certainly go. For if I see him with you I will kill him. Do you hear me, Daverdana?"

"Really? How exciting!" Daverdana's tone was languid, but her eyes gleamed with awakened interest.

"Would it please you, Daverdana, to have me murder for love of you?"

"Nobody has done it so far," answered Daverdana. "It would be quite new. Who can tell? Perhaps I could love you if you killed Miles for my sake."

Nils looked at her, and his glances were like hands caressing her skin.

"It is worth the chance," he said, and went out, laughing like a boy.

Drawing by Delevante

AS IF to prove her words she sprang up and did a swift pirouette.

WHEN Miles Cabot came in she was still sitting in the same chair. She had this gift—the gift of remaining still, unoccupied, tranquil.

Cabot was a young attorney, very successful. He was clever. More clever than Nils Eriksen, and more patient. He talked to Daverdana about painting and music and politics, about the latest thin book of verse and the newest hat from Reboux. He flattered the Benedictine and admired the Venetian glass. To lend reality to it all he criticized the leopard skin chair: it was in bad taste, it was too bizarre. But still, when Daverdana sat in it . . .

He knelt and took her foot in his hand. He spoke of it as he would of a rare porcelain, an antique coin. It was a work of art. His pleasure was so aesthetic, no one could take exception to it.

"It's a small thing to be treading my heart to bits," he said suddenly, in a tone that was slightly ironic.

Daverdana withdrew it quickly.

"Do you really care so much?"

"Yes." And, when she asked him why, "Because you are perfect. All my life I have loved perfect beauty, perfect harmony. And I thought it could exist only in dreams, but you are those dreams embodied in flesh. You have that perfection which we find, once in many centuries, in some rare work of art . . . a Mona Lisa . . . a Moonlight Sonata . . . a verse of Keats . . . Your voice is sweet and yet cadenced, never monotonous. Every movement is a melody. You have great aesthetic value. That's why I love you above all earthly things."

She took the bag herself and started up the incline. She wanted to come to him alone.

"That's a charming eulogy," said Daverdana. "It would make a pleasing epitaph."

They both laughed. But Daverdana added a trifle gravely: "You only love your image of me, Miles. It's because a yellow hag has my heart in a box that I keep these aesthetic values. If I fell in love it would be different. I wouldn't care if my hands got red and coarse in the service of a man I loved. I would like to be ugly, even—tired, weak, beaten—so that he would seem like a god beside me."

Miles was lulled by the cadenced sweetness of her voice. He said: "Your words are the image, Daverdana. My ideal—the reality."

"Ah, you don't love me, only your ideal," she murmured.

Cabot did not contradict her again, but he thought he had gained an advantage. He resumed: "In any case you believe that I will serve my ideal to the end, Daverdana?"

"What is the end?"

"You know what I wish it to be."

There was a pause.

"If it were otherwise?" she questioned.

"It would be a good end. Even death would be a good end, Daverdana, if it won me your love."

"What if you are called on to prove what you have said . . . of death?"

Cabot looked astonished. His eyes widened and for an instant Daverdana remarked with surprise that he resembled a rabbit. Then his [*Continued on page 118*]

By JOHN HELD, Jr.

Her Daily HALF

1.

PATSY McCLURE knew that if you need backing for an enterprise you go to Wall Street. Once she had heard two brokers discussing Sam Cushing, and one of them said: "He's a bear!" So she went to Sam, feeling sure that he would put, say, $10,000 behind her idea. Sam heard the idea and immediately had an attack of hand-writing in his check-book.

2.

THE Patsy Pavilion—here it is! Is Your Blood Pressure Low, or Vice Versa, High? Do You See Polka Dots Where You Shouldn't? Does That Tired Feeling Overtake you After a Lobster Luncheon With Your Secretary? . . . Let the Patsy Pavilion Cure You! Classes Limited to Six. Men Only. So Exclusive That You Have To Be a Preferred Stockholder.

DOZEN

That McCLURE GIRL'S Gym Class *Takes the* Weigh *of* All Flesh

3.

THE scene shifts to Park Avenue where men are financiers and wives are finicky. Mrs. Slenderleight has found in her husband's mail some perfumed literature about the advantages of the Patsy Pavilion. Mrs. S. has investigated, my dear, and would you believe her! . . . Here we see Mrs. Slenderleight being believed by six ladies to whom she is frantically telephoning.

4.

THE following day Patsy got a surprise when, instead of her great big he-athletes, there appeared for instruction Six Certain Wives. Patsy coughed coyly and said to them: "How sweet of you to make it an even daily dozen!" "Oh, but it isn't!" they said. "Your exercises are so splendid that our husbands are all cured—and we're taking their places!"

Next Month
PATSY MEETS AN OLD FRIEND

SHE Married

It was Roy who crawled from underneath and rose, partly sobered.

MANY a girl marries an importunate devotion, or money, or social position, or the chance to get into the movies. Perhaps one in a hundred finds her realized ideal. So it is not really remarkable that Kathleen should have married a yacht.

For eight months of the year she lived in a six-room apartment in an inland city. But ever since she could remember she had spent her summers in a little harbor town on the coast of Maine, and she never left it in September without tears, nor smelled the salt water again in June, without the thrill of the returned exile.

She grew up, thanks in part to these seaside summers, tall and straight and radiantly vigorous, with bright long-lashed eyes that could count a schooner's masts on the skyline without winking; grew up with a geranium pink in her cheeks and a geranium red in her lips that never figured in the druggist's bill, and with thick lustrous yellow hair that only curled up tighter when the North Atlantic fog strung it with tiny beads of moisture.

She underestimated these advantages. There were no young men to speak of at the Harbor, because fishing no longer offers a career to ambitious youth, and the old salts whose company she affected paid her compliments on her seamanship, but never on her looks. In the city she often had to snub boys who wanted to kiss her or hold her hand: the whole business of love, getting married and the skirmishing that precedes it, bored Kathleen. She eschewed books that dealt with it, reading sea stories almost exclusively, and skipping the ultimate chapter in which some girl, extraneous to the tale's action, causes the hero to behave in a way unworthy of his past.

And since the heart cannot live without love, Kathleen loved ships.

Her father's small salary just provided life's necessaries

Drawing by Golinkin

The night was calm and the salvaging of

A YACHT

—*but* Found *that* Love is Needed to Weather Heavy Storms

By KATHERINE HILL

for his family, but when the girl was fifteen he bought her, for a song, a second-hand sailboat, some thirty feet long and sound, though battered. A retired ship's carpenter made necessary repairs for love and the cost of the materials, and another friend discovered a torn sail that could be cut down to fit her. The result was *KrazyKat,* which Kathleen sailed in all weathers, and loved, and was a little ashamed of, and denied herself chocolates for, in favor of pots of paint and marine glue.

KrazyKat was the dearest thing in life to Kathleen, but her speed was limited, her smartness a minus quantity. When yachts put into the Harbor, beautiful strangers with tall masts and great spread of radiantly white canvas and glossy unblemished white paint and coiled butter-yellow sheets, Kathleen in *KrazyKat* circled wistfully about them, and doted on them without hope.

Of all the beauties that ever lowered anchor into Harbor mud, the *Kestrel* was easily queen. She came in one twilight of August, dropping her sails as a lovely woman slips a scarf, her engines purring almost noiselessly, her white sides glamorously glimmering, her masts incredibly tall when looked up at from *KrazyKat's* lowly stern. White-clad sailors carried out the skipper's orders smartly, and on the after-deck, in the most luxurious cushioned chair purchaseable, Roy Kaufman smoked and from time to time raised his elbow.

There were three other men; enough to make a bridge table. Kaufman, having recently rid himself of his third wife, was feeling misogynistic just now, and had invited no women. He looked up from his newspaper as the engines stopped, to take disdainful cognizance of the shores before him.

"Rotten little sepulcher, this looks!" he observed.

"Let's go ashore, what d'you say?" one of the other men suggested.

"What in hell would anybody go ashore for? Hot night life I'd expect to find in a burg like this. Maybe a pool game in back of the post office. I've been stuck in graveyards like this before. But if anybody wants to go, go ahead!"

the passengers was carried through efficiently.

When they had gone he stood up, stretched, lounged over and sagged against the rail. And turned straight up at him out of the dusk, in full illumination from the lit port-hole just below, was a girl's perfect face. It was rapt, smitten by some strong emotion to a beauty that was unearthly. Kaufman, whose misogyny was a fitful reaction from the keenest interest in the other sex, gripped the rail in sudden excitement.

"Good evening!" he dropped tentatively to the girl below. "Great little harbor you have here!"

"Great little boat you have there!" Kathleen returned daringly.

"Like to come aboard and see over her?"

Of course Kathleen wanted to. A little brass-railed ladder curved enticingly down the *Kestrel's* flank, and beyond it she glimpsed the coquetry of the after-deck's appointments: wicker chairs in robin's egg blue, cushions in intriguing designs, smoking stands, card tables, flowers. She tried to scorn these things as scarcely "salty," but the soul of the ship rose serene above her fripperies, and her soaring masts, her etched rigging, her long perfect lines, compelled Kathleen's heart.

"I will, if I may—for just a minute!" she said.

A sailor raced aft at Kaufman's signal to catch and knot her painter, and the girl came aboard.

The owner had a baldish head, a little black mustache, puffed underlids and false teeth. Kathleen was a good two inches taller than he . . . She drifted ecstatically about the yacht, laying fingers that thrilled with adoration against rail and mast and boom and snowy canvas.

"Isn't she beautiful—isn't she darling—isn't she adorable—"

"She's all of that," said Kaufman.

"You ought to be the happiest man in the world," she told him with conviction. "If I had a boat like this, why, I would never ask anything else as long as I lived!"

"Not till next time."

"No, *never*—I mean it!"

She looked so much as though she meant it that he wondered whether it might not be possible she really did. He had a genuine quickening of the heart at the idea, and began to chew his little mustache and eye her furtively. She was nearly the prettiest, and quite the freshest, thing he had seen in a long time, and she differed in every way from the jeweled, sophisticated and easy ladies he had known best. His first wife had been an early mistake, dowdy and plain; his second expensive and bad tempered; his last grasping and flagrantly unfaithful besides. This girl now—poetic hackneyed comparisons flooded his mind—was like a big vigorous pink rose with the morning dew on it. She would be nicer to kiss, he thought, than anything he had ever kissed. Her clothes were absurd—a shabby sweater and short skirt, stained keds—but she trod a ship's deck with the assured grace of a Viking's daughter, and there was an extraordinary similarity between Kath-

leen's feelings as she looked at the *Kestrel*, and Kaufman's as he looked at Kathleen. Each offered passionate homage, conceived a cankering desire and was conscious of tormented delight in the momentary closeness to the seductive object. Probably Kaufman, justly enough, felt the less hopeless of attainment.

"I shall be sticking around here the next few days," he said as he handed her off the yacht at last. "I wonder if you'd come out for a little sail tomorrow, if it's a nice day? You and—er—your mother!"

He had been most circumspect during her half hour's stay. It was impossible for any man not an utter fool to make a mistake about Kathleen.

She met your eyes squarely like a proud boy, and countered every little gambit of the sex game with a baffling blankness. Kaufman began to suspect that she was, what he had conceived of as probably mythical, an Innocent Girl—innocent, but nobody's fool.

Tomorrow was a nice day, and the yacht spread her wings and carried them far over rippling blue water. By evening Kaufman was the girl's slave, even as she, too, by that time, was more deeply enslaved by the *Kestrel*. The three-cornered wooing was shamelessly quick. The *Kestrel* stayed a week in harbor, and when Kathleen was not aboard her, her owner was dogging the girl's steps ashore. On the last day he offered her the yacht and incidentally himself.

"You can have her if you like, you know—man endows his wife with all his worldly goods! If you'd marry me we'd cruise down to the West Indies for our honeymoon."

It was not in Kathleen to refuse such an offer. Disregarding the incumbrance that went with it, she accepted the *Kestrel* with incredulous delight.

Her mother, disappointingly, was not so enchanted as the girl expected, when she was told the news. Instead she was startled, dubious and inclined to be plaintive. She kept on asking her daughter if she were sure she knew what she was doing. Kathleen was ridiculously young for her age, which after all was only eighteen, and moreover she was in love—with the *Kestrel*. You cannot reason successfully with people in love, and when Mrs. Randall pressed a little book on her and told her to read it, she fell into day-dreaming of her beautiful yacht over the first few pages, which seemed to be about seeds and bees—utterly dull—and never read further.

There were younger children, and secret worries about Mr. Randall's health. The mother could not oppose a marriage with a multi-millionaire quite wholeheartedly. She had done what she conceived to be her duty in remonstrating, and finding Kathleen determined she continued to look plaintive, but gave her consent.

THEY didn't make a social function of Kathleen's wedding. She and her mother came to New York a few days before the date, and assembled a circumscribed, rather pitiful trousseau in the time at their disposal. There was a sparsely attended ceremony at an uptown church, and afterwards Kaufman and Kathleen in the big Rolls-Royce took Mrs. Randall to the Grand Central, and having kissed her good-bye drove westward and up the Drive.

The *Kestrel* at anchor in the Hudson was more beautiful than Kathleen's memory of her, and the bride went aboard as Cophetua's beggar-maid may have entered the palace. The *Kestrel*, hers, was intoxicating to explore, and no royal castle could have given her half the thrill in possession.

A man met them, a young man, extremely good to look at, wearing a blue brass-buttoned coat and white trousers.

"My new sailing-master," said Roy. "Captain Ribera. Everything jake, skipper?"

The captain, Kathleen noted idly, seemed to have a grouch. He was almost rude in his monosyllabic acknowledgement of her greeting, but his beautifully modeled face and heavily lashed eyes wore their somber discontent with a Latin grace. Viewing him merely as an appurtenance of the *Kestrel*, she felt a vague pleasure in that he too, like all the rest, was perfect. Old sandy, stocky Captain McGee, who had sailed the *Kestrel* in the summer, was a good captain doubtless, but an unbeautiful one. It shot through Kathleen's mind that Roy alone wasn't up to standard now, in the moment in which she stood between the two men. He was a blot, really, on that little floating world of swift, fine-chosen things . . . But Roy was giving her the *Kestrel!* A rush of gratitude to him bore away the disloyal thought.

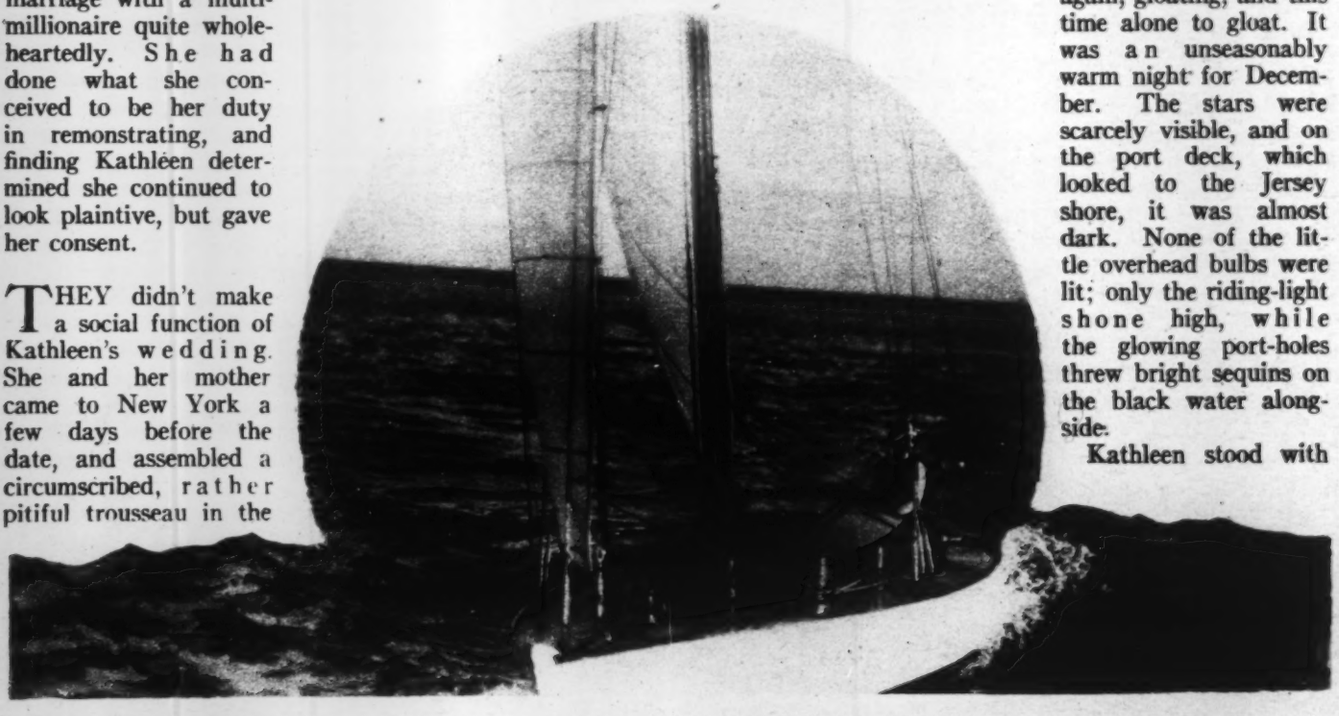
They dined on board, and were to sail at nine. After the meal Kathleen's gratitude to her husband had to stand a severe strain. They were alone together in the after lounge, and he came and sat beside her and, taking possession of one bare smooth arm, began to kiss it. The touch of the hot, slack lips, the disagreeable little tickle of the black mustache, she found quite horridly distasteful. She was glad when an imperative knock at the door interrupted them, and drove him from her side with a mumbled curse. He had locked the door, and had to rise to open it.

There was a whispered interchange, in the corridor just outside, which she couldn't hear. Then Kaufman came back for a moment looking thunderous.

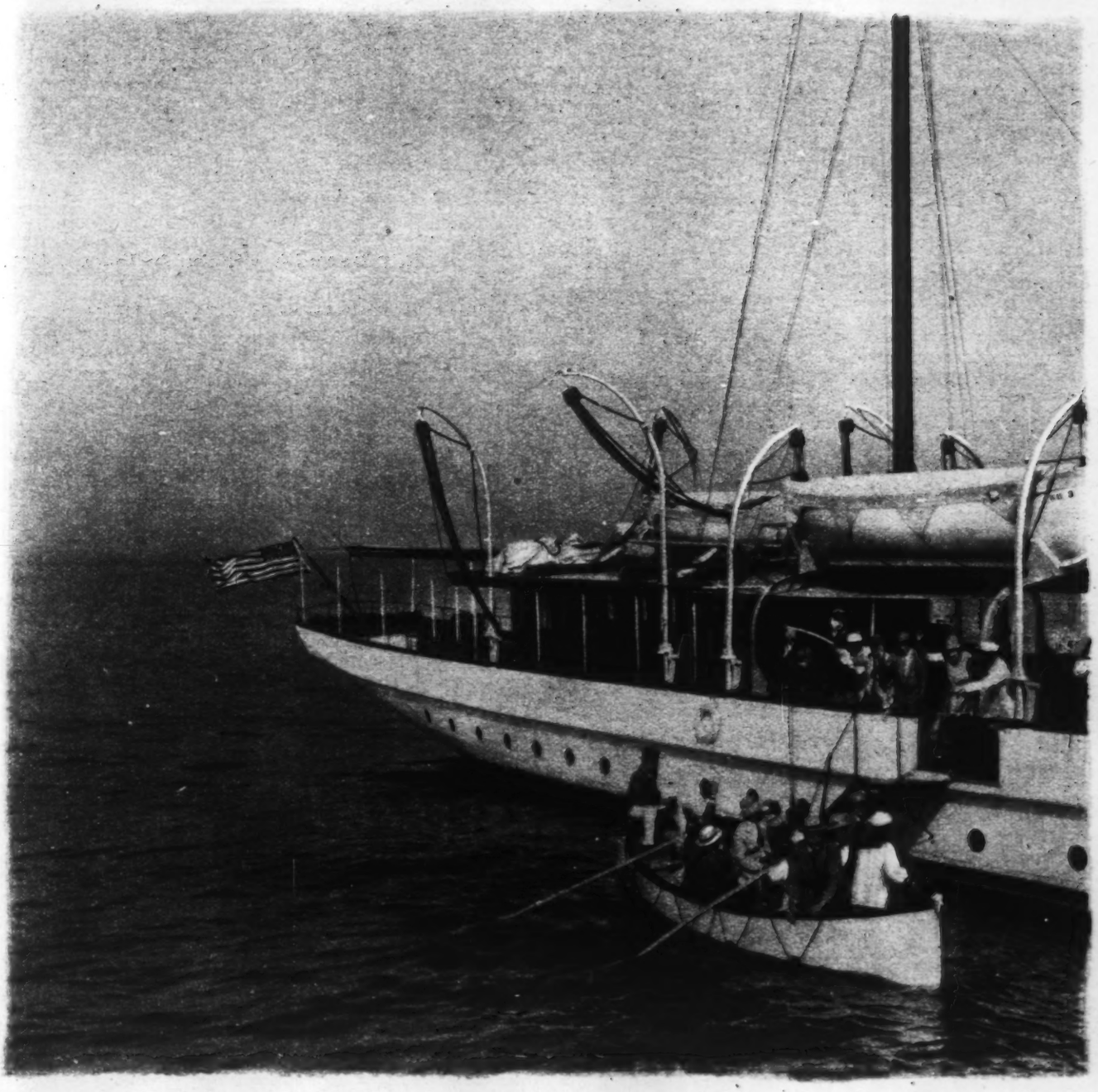
"I have to go ashore. It's a message from my lawyer—some damn hitch about our marriage. You stay here. I'll be back. I'll get it fixed up . . ."

She was quite willing to be left to roam over the yacht again, gloating, and this time alone to gloat. It was an unseasonably warm night for December. The stars were scarcely visible, and on the port deck, which looked to the Jersey shore, it was almost dark. None of the little overhead bulbs were lit; only the riding-light shone high, while the glowing port-holes threw bright sequins on the black water alongside.

Kathleen stood with



***KrazyKat* was the dearest thing in life to Kathleen and she sailed her in all weathers.**



At Nassau they took aboard certain carefree acquaintances of Roy's.

caught breath looking out, impatient for the voyage to begin. After all, being tickled by a black mustache was slight payment for this . . . Soon now they'd be ploughing southward, they'd lift wild horizons, run through storms and touch at little green magic islands inhabited by strange Spanish-speaking folk.

Voices, quite close, didn't disturb her, nor did it occur to her to make her presence known. The captain and the engineer were talking, at first about professional matters, and the personal reference to herself was introduced suddenly.

"Have you seen her—the latest Mrs. Kaufman?" It was Ribera speaking, and she was amused to notice that he was still cross. "Well, wait till you do. It's sickening, I tell you!"

"Why, the boys was saying she was a pip!"

"She's a magnificent child, a blonde princess out of a fairy tale . . ." He hardly seemed to be talking to the other man, seemed rather to be confiding his own thought to the night. "She's a girl to be loved—and she sells herself, or is sold, to that dirty hound! She has the honor to be, I believe, his fourth wife!"

The engineer spat over the side. "You said it, skipper," he agreed. "The owner's a swine. I seen things on this boat, and the ones he's married ain't the only ones been entertained here. Don't it look like women'll do anything for money? A bum like that oughtn't to be allowed to marry a straight kid, you or I'd say, but she must figger his money's worth the price!"

"If I thought that I shouldn't pity her. Still, it makes a man sick to see—"

Kathleen edged back, frightened by the moody violence of Ribera's speech. Her heart was beating hot and quick. She was angry, dismayed, amazed, all at once. What did those men mean? How dared they speak so of Roy—generous, obliging Roy—and in such strange terms of herself! Her first impulse was to confront them and demand an explanation, but vague subconscious instincts held her back.

She remembered how often she had had to assure her mother that she was quite sure she wanted to marry Roy, and how Mrs. Randall's tacit dissatisfaction with the match had dampened her own delight. She knew, of course, that she was Kaufman's fourth [*Continued on page 123*]

A Synthetic

The Story of a Girl *who could* Only Believe Her Eyes

"LEONE," scolded ma, "Peter Garth's parked his machine here for the last time. You can tell him so or leave my house."

LEONE BLAIR pushed her sister Alice into her bedroom and slammed the door against her mother's blast of language.

"Alice," she gasped, "I—I can't stand ma! Gee, I can't even respect her any more! She knows I loathe Dave Ketry and still she'd talk me into marrying him, if she could. Honest to God, Alice, I *hate* her——"

"Leone!" Alice Madden clapped a work-roughened hand over her sister's lips. Leone snatched at it savagely.

"I do!" she spat. "And she gets pleasure out of the vile intentions she credits to Peter Garth! Some married women beginning to get old have the darnedest minds! Ever watch 'em at the movies, see 'em lean forward at the worst parts——"

The door was thrown violently open and Mrs. Blair fifty, fat, self-righteous, entered and glared at her daughters.

"Listen to me, Leone," she said, shaking her finger at the girl, "Peter Garth's parked his machine in front of this building the last time he's goin' to, an' you can tell him so or leave my house! No daughter of mine is goin' to be the talk of the street." She clamped her weak lower lip over her thin upper lip and folded her arms.

"You'll miss my board money a lot, ma," the girl assured her, black eyes snapping above red cheeks. "Lawrence pays when he feels like it—that's all right, he's a boy—but my board is a regular Saturday night event. You couldn't gouge more than the regular allowance out of pa with a chisel, so you'll have to cut down on the movies and a lot of sloppy entertainment. And if I married Dave Ketry you'd be permanently cut off. Ever think of that, ma?"

"Alice," wailed her mother, "you hear her? Sassin' her mother, and I only doin' for her best good. Where'll you find a better boy than Dave Ketry, or better paid? If it's money you want, Leone—" shrewdly—"look up the union scale for structural workers and give yourself a treat. Dave's one of the best, and he's your own kind, and if he asts you you'd better say——"

"He did ask me," flashed the girl.

"Whatdidyuhsay?" gasped her mother.

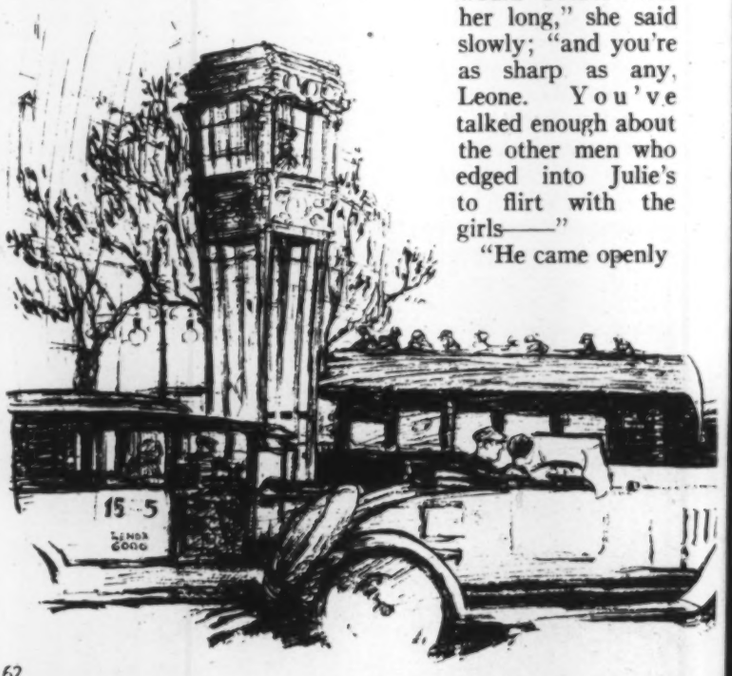
"Nothing. I stalled him."

Mrs. Blair collapsed weakly on the bed and stared at the slender, erect creature whose blazing eyes met her own.

"Stalled him!" she babbled. "Dave Ketry, that never asts twice for anything. . . . And she a manikin at Julie's! And it's that," going off at a tangent, "that's turned your head. Paradin' around all day in finery fit for a queen, seein' and apin' the customers and thinkin' yourself like 'em. That and this Peter Garth an' his big machine that means no good by you."

"Who, the machine?" giggled Leone hysterically.

By a feat of will the mother reached calmness. "I never raised a girl fool enough to think that Peter Garth would bother with her long," she said slowly; "and you're as sharp as any, Leone. You've talked enough about the other men who edged into Julie's to flirt with the girls——"



"He came openly

CINDERELLA

By

MARGARET RYDER

with his sister," defended Leone. "And the first time he met me afterward was accidentally—in a traffic jam, and he offered me a lift. And since then——"

"Since then you're the neighborhood talk," cried her mother. "It's rides and suppers on the North Shore and getting home at two——"

"When I stay at a rivet-throwers' ball until five with Dave it's all right though, isn't it?" countered Leone. "Honest, ma, if I told you I was stepping out with Dave for an evening in hell, you'd wish us a good time and forget it; but if I was going to church with Peter you'd find something to——"

"You'll not go to church with Peter," prophesied her mother sagely. "Don't plan on it . . . Leone," her voice took on a softer note, "forget Peter. Look at your sister here, who took my advice and married in her own class. Ain't she got as nice——"

"It's looking at her that gets me," panted Leone. "Oh, Alice, sweet," she cried contritely, clutching her sister's hand, "I don't mean to hurt you. But honest—that hot little flat of yours—and Junior yapping at your heels and you doing every bit of work—washing, scrubbing, waiting on that big lout evenings—— Say, ma," she spoke dully, "stop bragging about marrying Alice to that trained ape. You got all your ideas from Bertha Clay novels and sloppy movies, and they're rotten, cheap, sentimental. 'An honest man's love.' 'The mother of his children!' That's you! An honest man's washerwoman, scrub woman, beast of burden . . ."

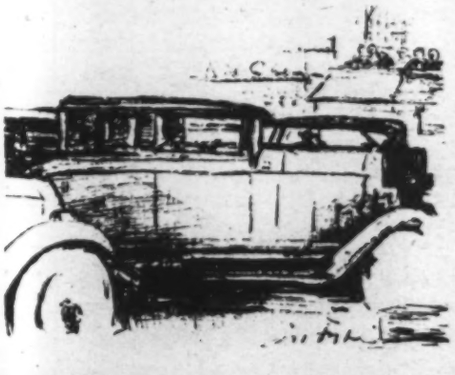
"Leone!" Lawrence Blair's voice from the next room carried above his sister's. "Shorten your wave length. Every family in this hive's tuned in. What's the row, anyhow?"

Leone laughed shakily. "Ma wants me to be as happy as Alice is," she hiccoughed. "Alice that hasn't had a decent new dud since she bought her trousseau; that never sees anything better than a neighborhood movie and has to keep right on working like a truck horse when she's——"

"What of it?" Lawrence demanded nonchalantly, coming into the room. "She married Gene, didn't she? What did she expect?"

"And for the privilege of being his wife she ought to be content with any old thing, huh?" retorted Leone. "What more can a woman want," she mimicked her mother's tone, "than an honest man's love . . . *Love!*"

"Listen." Lawrence dragged at a cigaret and puffed the smoke through his nostrils. "You won't be getting an honest man we all know unless you can your heavy date. Dave Ketry's not the kind of a sucker that'll take



AGAINST her wish he swung his car into the northbound traffic.

Drawing by J. H. Fyfe

what the Gold Bug leaves him."

The Venetian glass powder container broke so neatly on Larry's head that his first startled reaction was against the choking rice clouds that engulfed him. Then he swung savagely toward Leone, to bring up short before the laughing fury that advanced to meet him.

"Gutter-snipe!" she challenged.

"Fer Gawsakes!" Duncan Blair paused in the doorway and stamped peevishly to remove the powder that clung to his house slippers, "come out in th' sittin' room where ye can fight with some comfort—an' I can hear plain. Yer steppin' on each other in here—Lonie," he broke off, "did you bean Larry without seein' that yer dad had a ringside seat?"

"He said——" began the girl.

"And I say it again," trumpeted her brother. "You're no better than——"

He stopped. Duncan Blair towered above him, bushy gray eyebrows meeting above black eyes.

"Then what?" he challenged his son, his massive hands balled and huge shoulders rising.

"Aw," gulped Lawrence, jerking his chin up nervously.

"That all?" Duncan questioned. "Hear me Larry," he grasped the back of Larry's neck and held him rigid, "ever you so much as hint a foul word of your sister an' I'll take ye apart, by little an' little, till I reach your white liver!" Proud of his strength, exultant at the fear in his son's eyes, he pushed him from him. "G'wan wherever yer goin'," he bade him, "an' momma take Alice an' th' kid an' go to th' movies. Lonnie an' me—we've not had a chat this long while. Eh, Lonnie?"

"It's always Leone with you," whined his wife, "because she looks like your people. Good little Alice here——"

"I came over specially to visit with Leone," Alice Madden's voice came softly to her turbulent family. "I thought you, pa—and ma—could take Junior to the movies and leave us here. I don't see much of Leone lately.'

"Talk to her, Alice, like a good girl," admonished Mrs. Blair. "Maybe she'll hear reason from you."

"I could talk reason too," Duncan's voice floated back to them, "if I had a chanst. But in this house . . ."

When the closing of the outer door proclaimed their departure the two girls ventured into the living room. Alice Madden clung to the hand of her younger sister as the latter pushed her gently into the most comfortable chair the room boasted.

"Leone—" her voice trembled—"you're so—so—free! I hate to think of your marrying."

"So do I," answered Leone. "Hate it so that I've about decided not to. I'll have an easier time modeling than I would being Dave Ketry's slave. It's only—my ankles are giving out, Alice, and I've inherited weak arches from some of our flat-footed low-brow ancestors. But if I had a shop of my own——"

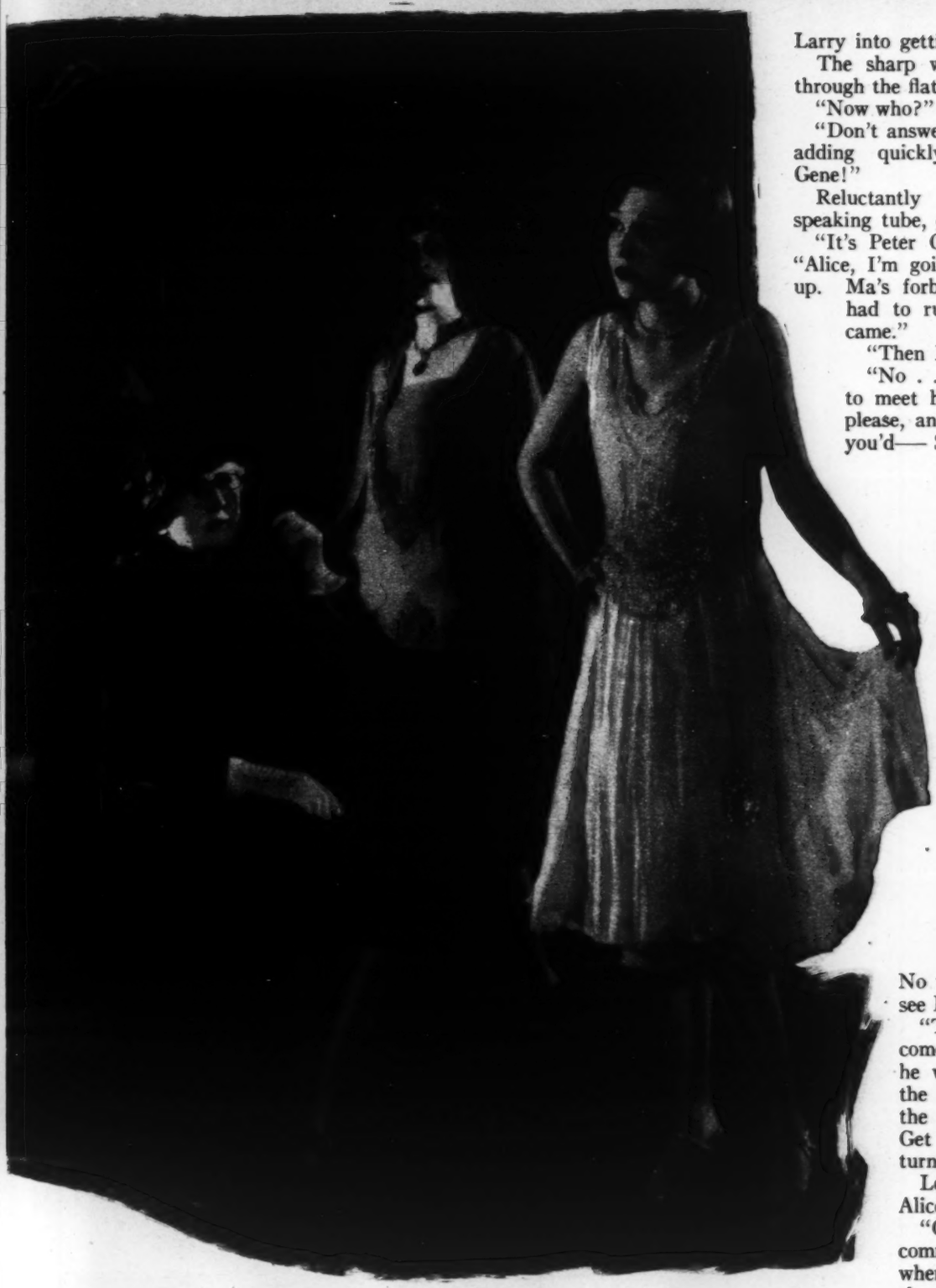
"How'd you ever get it?" despaired Alice. "You'd never be able to save enough. Oh, how I do wish——"

THEN she saw Peter handing a package to Madame Julie. She wished—she did wish—he wasn't so easy to look at; and that her heart'd behave!

"Uh huh," nodded Leone. "I know you do, Alice. You're the best little scout, and I ought to be shot for treating you to an exhibition like this tonight. But when ma starts on Peter . . . Alice, are you happy with Gene?"

Alice Madden's hands picked nervously at the strings of cheap beads about her throat, and the sight was gall to her sister. For she remembered a dainty Alice, whose polished fingers had danced lightly over typewriter keys until Gene Madden—and ma—had persuaded her that life as the wife of a first class mechanic was a joyous thing. Leone's eyes traveled swiftly over Alice's shoes, her heavy lisle stockings. "Are you, Alice?" burst from her.

Alice spoke slowly: "You can't be happy with any one that just uses you. Leone, after the first six months it doesn't make any difference who you've married—they're all alike. And if they're poor, they're everlastingly telling



you what a snap they had before they married, harping on expenses, expecting five dollars worth for every one they give you—making you almost beg for that . . . And that's what I wanted to talk to you about, Leone. I've just—got—to have an electric washer—and Gene won't buy one. Says his mother used a washboard all her life and finished the family wash three hours before he was born and ironed it two days later . . . And I thought if you would lend me the money I could pay you back, a little at a time, and he'd never know. He won't go near the basement . . . Could you, Leone?"

"I'll stop in and have one sent out to you tomorrow," promised Leone. "And Alice, it'll be a present, dear, so if Gene does happen to see it——"

"Leone!" Alice fingers clutched her sister's in an ecstasy of relief. "But I'll pay you back."

"I was going to buy ma a radio to make up for sassing her lately," Leone explained, "so it's all right. I'll nag Larry into getting the radio for her."

The sharp whine of the bell cut through the flat.

"Now who?" mumbled Leone.

"Don't answer it," prompted Alice; adding quickly, "but maybe it's Gene!"

Reluctantly Leone went to the speaking tube, called and listened.

"It's Peter Garth," she whispered. "Alice, I'm going to have him come up. Ma's forbid it for weeks; I've had to run down whenever he came."

"Then I'll go."

"No . . . Alice, I want you to meet him—and—watch him, please, and afterward tell me if you'd—— Sit down—that's him!"

Every cheap and ill-selected bit of furnishing in the room grew in cheapness and poor taste to Alice Madden as Peter Garth bent to take her hand. He looked so cool, so clean; there was deference in the very bend of his sleek head, and instant solicitude leaped from his gray eyes. The subdued rumble that was his voice carried comfort and a sense of rest. Not since she had left her job to marry Gene had any man shown her deference . . . No wonder Leone couldn't see Dave Ketry . . .

"Thought you might come for a drive, Leone," he was saying, "up along the North Shore through the ravine road you like. Get cooled off before turning in. What say?"

Leone hesitated, and Alice spoke.

"Go on, Leone," she commanded. "I'll tell ma where you are when she——"

"But won't you come, too," interrupted Peter. "It's fairly cool, driving, and we'll fetch you back whenever you say. Make her come, Leone," he urged. "There's room."

"She'll come." Leone's voice quivered with joy as she darted to her room for her prized Spanish shawl for Alice. Alice would have one pleasant evening to remember, anyway . . . She glimpsed the smile on her sister's lips as Peter took the shawl from her and wrapped it about Alice. Why couldn't Larry, or pa, or any of the rest of their men folks do things like that? She scribbled a note to her mother and turned to the two who were chatting easily.

"Well?" she smiled at Peter.

"Very well," he smiled back. "I felt lucky all day, and now I know why." He took Alice's arm and preceded Leone from the room. Leone's throat contracted as she followed them down the two. [*Continued on page 102*]

Diary of a Little French

By
MARCELINE d'ALROY

Monday Night.

Re the Man with No Preludium.

NOW I must finish writing about my first motor-car ride alone in America with an awkward American. Oh, these U. S. men! They march too quick for me!

Well, Friday night I left myself in Ossie's arms—in my diary — and that was where I was afraid I might literally stay for longer than I wished, if I could not think of some way to get out of them.

I learned from this flappaire what it means to catch them coming and going.

This Ossie Baldman, he is a man of steel. And I am being crushed in his arms like a grape is crushed in the press.

Suddenly, like an inspiration, there flashed across my mind the experience of my beautiful friend, the Marchioness de Gaumin.

Once in a hotel in Paris, a young and handsome stranger had entered her room. Locking the door behind him, he put the key in his pocket, and came straight over to her . . .

"*Mon Dieu!* Antoine!" I asked, "what did you do?"

"*Chérie,*" she replied, "when I found myself in his arms I just went gaga! For," she observed, "a man of that type is fired to further enthusiasm by the struggle, and the greater the woman's resistance the more he desires to overcome it."

I remembered that Antoine, who has brains as well as beauty, said also: "If men take your kisses *malgré vous*—against your wish—let them. But first take every spark of feeling out of your lips. Then the man, feeling he is kissing the equivalent of mud or meat, will stop to see what strange phenomenon he is holding."

That was what she did. *Bon!* I, too, would go gaga!

Suddenly then I go utterly limp, heavy, sodden in the arms of Ossie. And *voilà!* as she said, he stopped at once and looked at me.

But then, this man of steel, he puts his left arm under my body and lifts me like I was a child—in weight only—onto his knee. *Quel horreur* . . .

Ah, I thought, this gaga does not work with Americans; they will kiss even a dead one!

So I sat up abruptly and spoke very fast and furiously. I told him a Frenchwoman's lips were to be taken, yes, but not by an imbecile. That American men were impossible. Deplorable. That as a husband for the American woman they might be marvelous, but never could they make a lover of any consequence to a woman of intelligence. Never! Never! For they, none of them, had any preludium.

"*Pre* what?" asked Ossie, who was now looking at me in astonishment. He seemed quite calm, the brute!

"Pre-ludium! Don't you know what the opera has, the preludium, the overture? But no, the American man wants the curtain to rise at once . . ."

Then, at that, if he has not just roared with laughter!

"You are perfectly adorable!" was all he said, adding: "When you are angry your accent is more charming than ever!" His whole attitude was very tantalizing.

Yet, when I told him soberly he had ruined my evening and that I was mortified at his conduct, he did try nicely to make things right. But, being a woman, I was hard.

"Why don't you have some experience with well-bred women?" I said. "It would do you good!"

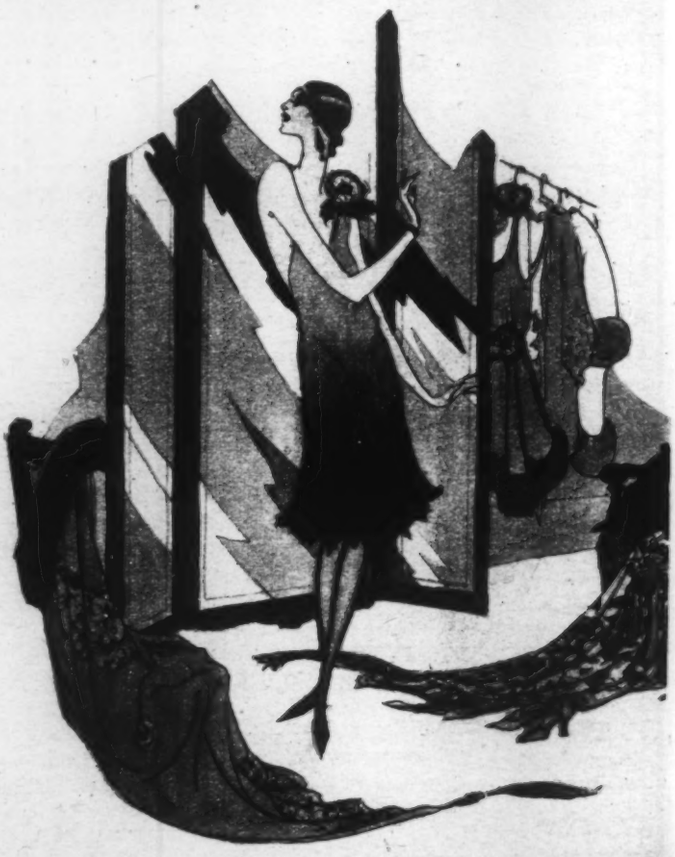
"Why, I treat all women like this!" he blustered.

"Ah! That is what I wanted to find out. Now tell me, do they all what you call stand for it?"

"Not all, but——" He had the grace to hesitate. He bent down and started pulling at the brakes of the car. I thought he was embarrassed till I saw that he was smiling to himself.

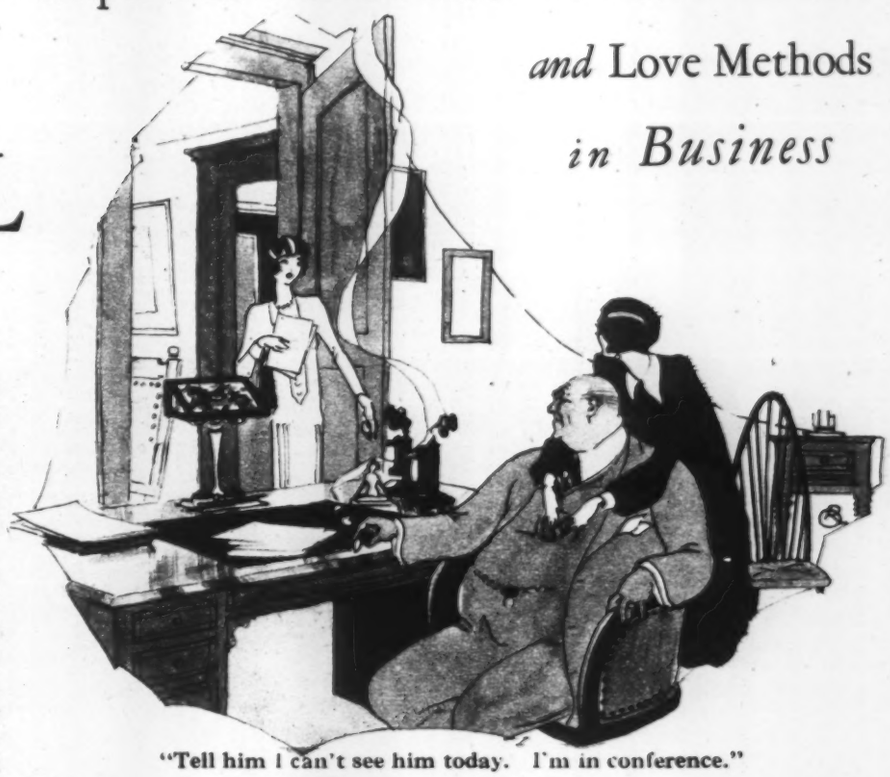
He turned the car round, and slowly then we glided back along the winding ribbon road that had led to nowhere.

How strange is life! In but a few moments a friend turns into a lover, or a lover ceases to be a friend. It is woman's supreme adventure that she never knows what any man



GIRL

Her Experience *with* Business Methods *in Love, and* Love Methods *in Business*



"Tell him I can't see him today. I'm in conference."

may mean to her at any given moment. And men like Ossie know this.

The slender moon had retired for the night. In the darkness side by side we talked as goose to goose. I thought Ossie's ego was unruffled until he said:

"What's the matter with me that after these two hours I have registered negative?"

"Perhaps because efficiency methods do not count in love," I told him, laughing now. "You drive through in your business on will power, and your force and bluster it carries people along. Then you figure that you can do the same in love. Drive through, overcoming the fear or reluctance of the woman by your own strength and dexterity.

"But love in my country is not made like that. And no man who tries to ride rough over my feelings could ever reach my heart."

He patted my knee gently. I was pleased he did not tell me the man who won my heart would be lucky. He is not crude in all things. Ossie has brains, and if he ever found out how to use them in love he would be a very devastating man.

He said at parting he would give me anything I wanted. Even a preludium. And then he added:

"Why didn't you slap my face?"

Ah! Ossie Baldman, there is a worse punishment than that awaiting you . . . I know now that Ossie is a little in love with me. Soon I think he will be deeply in love. Then, for the bruises he made on my feelings tonight, he shall suffer one hundredfold. Because beneath those steel ribs I feel this awkward American has a heart.

Re Cora Lee, the Stenographer.

THIS customer was small, and of a certain charming prettiness, what they call here, flappaire. She laughs lightly for no other reason than to please, and when she does it, she puts her small bobbed head on one side in a tantalizing manner. She reminds me of a small bird, bright-eyed, soft-bodied, and knowing of look.

She told me she was a stenographer, though she looked not eighteen. Yet, after she had gone, I could not help but wonder on how many branches she had already perched.

Cora's life would never be a hard one, her little tongue would make it smooth. Besides, if she did not like a situation, she would just fly away.

She spoke quick and with animation, as if all were of a vast importance.

This is how she began:

"Oh! Madame de Soie! I have heard so much about you. Your French accent, and your *chic*—" she pronounced it chick—"and the marvelous way you wear your clothes, and oh! I think your bob is perfectly fascinating, and your perfume is wonderful." She looked me over. "You look just like a very expensive French doll. So exotic. Yet you are really quite simply dressed. Tell me, *madame,* could you make me look Frenchy too?"

"I could, if you would do all I say. Will you?"

"Well, I see your skirt is much longer than mine. I will do anything you ask except lengthen it," she said laughing.

And it is true, her legs were as pretty as the rest of her.

"But it is not fair to tempt with both ends," I said, smiling. I liked her. She amused me.

"Both ends?"

"Yes, with your legs as well as your lips."

She laughed. "But nobody sees my lips from behind."

Ah, so that is what Ethel means by catching them going and coming, I thought. It also gave me an idea for Poppy Lane, the show girl. Ah, these [*Continued on page 108*]

This girl was like an eagle.
Ah, yes, nests would be in danger.

Of All the Fears,
the *Most Fearful* is
SUPERSTITION

PEACOCK

"OH, COME now, Barney, you're joking." Clive Frasier leaned back in his chair and laughed, his thin, colorless face cracking into a fantastic pattern of fine wrinkles. "You've been reading detective stories."

Commissioner Barney Schill grinned in response.

"Do you read 'em, too, Clive?" he asked.

"Sure, every one that I can lay my hands on. And I've read a thousand just like this little plot you're starting for me. A rich man is found in his study murdered. Oh yes, the butler finds him. For some reason that I can't fathom, it's always the butler. Well, good old Sherlock McGluck is called in. So far, so good; but then comes the hitch. There are at least a dozen people who wanted to bump the old boy off. You suspect one after another, and then in the last two lines you find out that it's the one apparently innocent person mentioned. That's in the good stories. In the bum ones, the person hasn't been mentioned at all. I'll have to admit that some of these writer boys are pretty good. They fool me at least half the time."

"Me too," the Commissioner admitted. "But let's get down to this Morton case. I know it must have sounded like a joke when I began by telling you that he had been found in the study, and that it was the butler who found him. But the rest of it is different, Clive, so different that it's got me stumped. You'll notice that we've kept it out of the papers. We're going to let out today that Prescott Morton committed suicide, but that's all we are going to tell. There's no doubt that he did commit suicide; of that we're absolutely positive."

"Well, then, why did you call me in?" demanded Clive. "If the coroner's jury is sure to turn in a suicide verdict, that's all there is to it."

Barney Schill lighted a cigaret and then shook his head slowly. "No, Clive," he disagreed amiably, "that isn't all there is to it. There's the peacock feathers."

"The peacock feathers?"

"Yes, peacock feathers. Dozens of them."

"For the love of Pete, Barney, start at the beginning and tell this straight. Morton didn't commit suicide with peacock feathers, did he? How did he do it? Tickle himself to death?" His pale blue eyes were searching Schill's face suspiciously. Schill was not one to indulge in professional tricks and his face was perfectly sober—but *peacock feathers!* There was certainly a catch somewhere.

"No," replied Schill, "he shot himself with a revolver. But apparently the peacock feathers drove him to it. That's the damnably clever part of it. Even if we do find out who is responsible for those feathers, we can't arrest him. As I said before, Morton positively killed himself, and you can't arrest another man because Morton committed suicide." He was talking more to himself than he was to Frasier. The puzzled look on Frasier's face made him realize, however, that he was only making confusion more confounded, and so he paused to arrange his thoughts before attempting an orderly explanation. He slid the package of cigarets across the table and advised Frasier to have one. "It's quite a story," he explained, "and a damned queer one, too."

Clive extracted a cigaret from the package, lighted it, tossed the match into the tray, and then commanded briefly: "Shoot."

"Well, it was like this," Schill began: "Morton, you

FEATHERS

By PERCY MARKS
Author of "The Plastic Age"

Her manner was defiant and a little frightened. "What do you want?" she said.

know was terrifically rich but eccentric; a grouchy old fellow who did no end of kind things for everybody. They say he turned queer after his wife died about ten years ago. He stayed on in his big house in Pelham and kept a whole bunch of servants. All of them, by the way, have been with him at least five years, and some of them have been with him twenty. I'll tell you right now that the servants are out of it. We've put every one of them through the fire, and if there was ever a lot of honestly heart-broken people, they're it. I judge that he was a sort of crabby old father to the lot of them. Well, never mind them now.

"We got the story from the butler. Clyde Simmons, his name is. He's an old Englishman—sixty-two, I think—and he's been with Morton most of his life. He said that about a month ago, Morton got a letter in a square envelope. It came to the house and Morton opened it at breakfast. That's how Simmons happened to see it. Well, all there was in the envelope was a square card with five barbs of a peacock feather pasted on it. And written underneath was February 18."

"That's yesterday," interrupted Clive.

"Yes, and it was yesterday morning that Morton killed himself." Schill paused to crush his cigaret in a tray and then continued: "Simmons said that the old man was completely confused by the card. He couldn't make a thing out of it. He asked Simmons what he thought it meant, and, of course, Simmons didn't know. The next morning another card came with the five opposite barbs and with February 18 written on *it*."

"Wait a minute," Clive asked, holding up his hand. "Just what do you mean by a barb of a peacock feather? The stem?"

"Oh, no. You know how a peacock feather is made—the round feather tip, I mean—the part with the eye. It

isn't solid; it's made of a whole lot of little feathers, each one sitting tight next to the one beside it. It's just like a fern with a central stem and a lot of fine blades radiating from it. Maybe 'barb' isn't the right word, but one of the boys in the office said it was. Here, wait, I'll show you." He opened the drawer of his desk and picked up a card almost three inches square. On it was pasted the brilliant tip of a peacock feather, each barb being slightly separated from the one next to it. In large, sprawling letters, "February 18" was written below the feather.

While Clive examined the card, Schill continued his story. "Now every morning one of those cards came through the mail to Morton. Each one had several barbs of the feather and each one had February 18 written on it."

"There's one barb missing," said Clive looking up. "It's the center one."

"SAY, I can't remember all the dames that come here!"

"Here it is." Schill opened the desk drawer again and extracted another card with a single barb pasted on it. "This came yesterday morning, and Morton didn't wait to paste it in; he killed himself first."

"You don't mean to tell me Morton killed himself on account of this feather. Barney? Why, that's ridiculous. The feather must have been a threat of some sort, and Morton must have known who was sending the barbs."

"Simmons is positive he did not know. He says that the old man was completely mystified by them. He's absolutely sure of that, and I'm inclined to think that he is right. But you haven't heard the whole story yet.

"Those cards came every morning, and each one was sent from a different postal district. One would come from the Bronx and the next one from Brooklyn, and then one from Hoboken, and the next from Yonkers. You'll notice, too, that that is left-handed handwriting. We've got a number of the cards, but Morton handled them so much that we haven't a chance to find a finger print. Probably there aren't any prints, anyhow; I'll bet whoever sent those cards used gloves. He was being mighty careful, that's sure."

Clive was examining the cards minutely, but he looked up long enough to ask: "How did Morton act after the first week?"

"Simmons says," Schill explained, "that at first he seemed just mystified and rather interested. Then he began to get nervous and irritable. He was naturally that way anyhow, you know, but he got worse and worse. The first thing in the morning he'd ask if the cards had come and when Simmons had given it to him, he'd rush into the library and paste the new barbs on that card you've got. You see, after the first few cards came, it was plain that the barbs all came from a single feather, and Simmons says that Morton couldn't wait to get the new barbs pasted on with the rest. But he got more and more excited, and by the time the eye of the feather began to fill in, he was almost beside himself. Simmons doesn't give a very good account of that, but from the talk of the other servants, I gather that Morton was mighty close to the verge of insanity along toward the last—and that he was terrified. Why he talked to no one but Simmons about it, I don't know, and Simmons doesn't either. I imagine that he thought it was too trivial at first to call in a detective, and that by the time it began to seem serious to him, he wasn't sane enough to.

"Well, on February 17, when only one more barb was needed to complete the feather, Morton was wild with excitement, and yesterday morning he was trembling all over when he asked for the card. Simmons thinks that he hadn't slept for nights. When Simmons gave him the card, he took it and as usual went into the library. It was only a minute later when the servants heard a shot. They rushed into the library, and there was Morton, sprawled on the desk with a bullet in his brain. Now, here's the strangest part of it. That library was almost hidden in peacock feathers. There were dozens of them scattered all over the room, stuck between the books, draped over the pictures, spread along the mantel; they were everywhere."

Schill was rewarded with a start of astonishment from Clive. "What! Peacock feathers everywhere!"

"Everywhere, Clive; dozens of them. And here's further mystery. We can't find out how the fellow got into the library. It has French doors that lead out onto a low porch, but those doors were locked yesterday morning, and our men found all the doors and windows locked when they got there. It was cold yesterday, you remember, and the servants hadn't opened anything but the back door; and the cook who opened that is positive it was locked. The feathers were apparently handled with gloves; anyway, we can find no prints anywhere in the room. And the snow that fell in the night did away with any footprints that we might have found. Frankly, Clive, we haven't a clue—and since the whole affair was uncommonly subtle, I decided to call on you once more. I knew that you'd like to sharpen your wits on a case like this."

Clive leaned back in his chair and stared at the ceiling, a faint smile drawing at his lips. "Hm," he murmured, "hmmm . . ."

"Well, what do you make of it, Clive?" demanded Schill. "Isn't it a pretty poser?"

Clive's smile widened into a grin as he brought his gaze down to meet Schill's. "You scientific Sherlocks make me laugh," he said banteringly. "Finger prints! Bosh! If you had a dozen perfect

"Chinese stores always have a

"Maynard," said Sheldon, "this is Mr. Frasier who is investigating Mr. Morton's death."

specimens in your desk right now, I wouldn't look at them —not this time, anyhow. The person who donated those feathers to Morton was a bit of a genius and a bit of a fool. Your men have concentrated on the genius side; I'm going to hunt for the fool."

Schill leaned forward eagerly. "What do you mean, Clive? You don't mean to tell me you've seen through it already."

"No, but I've got a hunch." He leaned across the desk, extracted another of Schill's cigarets from the package, lighted it, and then picked up his soft, gray hat. "I've got a hunch, a good hunch too." He rose and held out his hand. "Thanks for the chance at this case, Barney. It's going to be fun." He slipped the card with the feather pasted on it into his pocket and grinning amiably at Schill, departed.

Drawings by Johan Bull

lot of peacock feathers."

Clive taxied to Morton's office on Dey Street. He asked the girl at the telephone desk who was in charge.

"Mr. Sheldon," she replied. "He's the senior vice-president."

"I wish to see him at once if possible. My name is Frasier. I'm from headquarters."

Sheldon welcomed Clive pleasantly and asked what he could do for him.

"Did you know," Clive asked, "that Mr. Morton committed suicide?"

"Yes, I knew. It's dreadful. No one can imagine what made him do it. He hasn't been in very good health, but he really wasn't ill, the business is in first class shape, and he had hundreds of friends. He had a lot to live for." Sheldon was genuinely distressed, his ruddy face heavy with sorrow.

"So I've heard," agreed Clive. "But tell me, have you noticed any change in him lately? Did he seem irritable and nervous?"

"Oh, yes. In the last few weeks he has been a different man. He was the kindest man that ever lived, but he had a sharp way about him that made strangers think that he was hard. But lately he has been genuinely irritable, and for the last week he has been terribly nervous. He didn't seen sick, just excited."

Clive nodded in agreement. "Yes, that's what the butler said. Something must have been disturbing him seriously. I'd like very much to see his office, and I'd like particularly to see his calendar for the past week."

Sheldon rose and led the way into an adjoining room. Clive followed him across the thick rug to the mahogany

THE next morning another card came with February 18th written on it."

desk. Its flat top, bare of papers, had been carefully dusted.

"Miss Neimann probably has his calender. I'll ask her." He pushed a button on the desk, and a few seconds later a gray-haired woman opened the door.

"Have you Mr. Morton's calendar for the past week, Miss Neimann?"

"Yes, Mr. Sheldon."

"Will you bring it here, please?"

The calendar proved interesting. All the entries, one excepted, had been changed from February 18 to February 20. The one exception read simply, "Settle with Maynard."

"Do you know why Mr. Morton postponed those engagements from the eighteenth to the twentieth?" Clive asked Miss Neimann.

"No, I don't," she replied, "that is, I don't know why he scratched them from the eighteenth. I do know, though, why he skipped the nineteenth. It was Friday, and Mr. Morton never transacted any business on Friday that he could avoid; all those engagements could be postponed."

"Was he superstitious?" Clive asked.

"Oh, very," Miss Neimann and Sheldon answered together. Miss Neimann added: "I worked for him for twenty-five years, and I've never known him to make an important engagement for Friday if he could escape it. And he had an absolute horror of a black cat crossing his path. Once when I first came here, I laughed at him for saying that his day was ruined because a black cat had walked in front of him. He was furious. I thought he was going to discharge me then and there."

While she talked Clive had been examining the calendar. He asked her about the various notations and found that all of them concerned details of the business. "Well, how about this note to settle with Maynard?" he asked Miss Neimann. "Do you know who he is?"

"Oh, yes—Gus Maynard. He's the assistant cashier. He's been here about ten years. I haven't any idea, though, what the note means. Mr. Morton made it himself. You see, it's in his own handwriting."

"I'd like to see him." Clive stated quietly.

"Certainly," Sheldon agreed, "but let's go back to my office, if you don't mind. It depresses me to stay in here. Miss Neimann will send Maynard to us."

They returned to Sheldon's office and waited for Maynard, who proved to be a man about thirty years old, rather shabbily dressed, and obviously very tired. He was slender and extremely pale, but his pallor suggested weariness and mental depression rather than poor health.

"Sit down, Maynard," said Sheldon. "This is Mr. Frasier. He is a detective who is investigating Mr. Morton's suicide, and he would like to ask you some questions."

Maynard glanced at Clive in quick surprise, but there was no fear or confusion in his manner. He sat down without a word and waited quietly.

"I'd like to know," began Clive, "what a notation on Mr. Morton's calendar means. It says, 'Settle with Maynard.' It was set for the eighteenth."

Maynard turned to Sheldon and asked weakly, "You know, don't you?" He seemed like a man utterly worn out, one who had suffered intensely, so intensely that he no longer cared about the cause of his pain.

"Why, no," Sheldon replied, "I haven't the slightest idea."

"He never told you?"

"No, Maynard. The notation means nothing to me."

Maynard's eyes filled with tears. "That was like him not to," he murmured. "He was the whitest man that ever lived."

The man's sudden sorrow caused Sheldon and Clive to exchange a glance of surprise and wonder. His emotion was so undeniably genuine that Clive waited for several minutes before questioning him further, and even then he felt a little cruel.

"Won't you please explain, Mr. Maynard?" he asked finally. "We're very much in the dark."

Maynard lifted his head and looked at Clive defiantly. "Yes, I'll explain," he said with sudden fire. "I might as well. The money's paid back and the books are properly balanced, but it'll get out sometime now, I suppose, though Mr. Morton wouldn't have ever told."

"Money!" exclaimed Sheldon. "What money?"

"The money I took. I took a thousand dollars six months ago." He paused to laugh sardonically. "You've heard this story a thousand times, and so have I, only I didn't have sense enough to know that I'd be the thousandth-and-one fool. I have a friend who's in a broker's office down on Broadway. He had a sure tip for me, you know, a sure tip. You've heard of sure tips before, haven't you? So had I—but, oh, this was an *absolutely* sure one. I'd make five for one without fail. The only trouble was that I didn't have any money to gamble with. I'm not going to tell you how I got low

enough to steal it from the Company, but I did—and, like the rest of the fools, I lost it. You see, I thought I was only borrowing it for a week or two, and then I'd have enough money to pay for an operation on my little girl's leg. She had infantile paralysis," he added quite simply.

"What did you do," asked Clive, "when you found that you had lost the money?"

"I told Mr. Morton. He swore at me so hard that I thought he was going to have me arrested on the spot. That wasn't it, though. He was mad because I hadn't come to him about my little girl. He told me that I ought to have known that he would have helped me out. Finally he calmed down and told me that he would give me six months to the day to pay back the thousand, and that if I didn't pay it back then, I'd have to take the consequences. I knew that he meant it. Then he told me that he'd see about Betty—that's my little girl." Again Maynard's brown eyes filled with tears. "He sent her to the hospital and paid for the operation—for everything. She's all right now—almost," he finished in a whisper.

"But you said that you had paid the money back?"

"I put it back yesterday and corrected the books," muttered Maynard. "Somes, he's the cashier, never knew, but the accountants are coming next week."

"But," demanded Sheldon, "why did Mr. Morton have that notation on his calendar?"

"Because I came to him a few days ago and asked him to give me three days more. He was terribly nervous and excited and said he wouldn't do it. He raged at me and put down that note on his calendar and then waved it in my face. He said that he'd send me to prison if I didn't have that money Thursday morning. I explained to him that my wife had written to a friend in California who had telegraphed that she was sending the money but that it wouldn't get here until Saturday. He said that he didn't care, that I ought to have thought of the friend earlier. The money came yesterday morning. She'd sent it by air mail. We hadn't thought of that."

"So, after all, you did have it on time?" Clive said in his gentlest manner in order to calm the man. He was obviously restraining himself with a great effort from an hysterical outburst.

"Yes, sir, I had it."

"Do you mind telling me where you were Wednesday evening?"

"Oh, no, I don't mind. I was hunting from seven o'clock until midnight for five hundred dollars. I called on about a dozen people, and got fifty," he concluded bitterly.

"I see. I won't keep you any longer, Mr. Maynard." As the man rose, Clive added reassuringly: "And don't worry. You've told me all I wanted to know. Mr. Sheldon and I aren't going to tell anybody, and we're not going to trouble you further. That's right, isn't it, Mr. Sheldon?"

"Absolutely. Maynard had made restitution. Mr. Morton would not wish him either prosecuted or persecuted." He smiled, pleased with his heavy play on words.

"Thank you," Maynard said quietly, his eyes lighting with relief. "I—I really don't think I could stand much more."

He opened the door and left the room hastily.

"You believe him, don't you?" asked Sheldon as the door closed.

"Entirely. I didn't ask him to name the people he had seen Wednesday night because I felt positive that he had a perfect alibi. The person I'm looking for won't have an alibi for Wednesday night."

"What do you mean?" Sheldon demanded eagerly. "You don't think——"

"That Mr. Morton was murdered? No. He committed suicide all right. What I'm trying to find out is why he did it. Let it go at that, please, Mr. Sheldon. And I'm very grateful for the help you've given me." He rose and held out his hand. "Thanks."

"I SNEAKED around the side of the house. The library was lighted and I could see Mr. Morton sitting at a desk."

When Clive reached Dey [*Continued on page 126*]

that she hadn't recognized him. But he couldn't dodge her for two whole days, still less dodge her husband. It might as well be now. He walked toward her, his calm exterior hiding a twitching fear.

"Mrs. Blanchard?" Amazingly, a fear that matched his own was thinly veiled in her eyes. "Surely you remember me—Glenn Mercer."

"Oh, of course!" Smiling, suddenly relaxed, she beckoned him to the chair beside her. "I saw the resemblance; but you look so—so different."

"I am different, thank God." His bronzed face purpled. "I hardly dare hope that people who used to know me will believe that, but it's true."

She was puzzled; he suspected that, unused to talking to people of his own kind, he was in danger of saying too much. Back to the commonplace, then.

"How's Carl?" he asked lightly.

Now it was she who flushed.

"Carl? God knows." Under light contempt her voice had a hurt quiver. Mercer fumed, realizing that he had forgotten what to say in awkward moments.

"I—I'm sorry," he stumbled.

She laughed metallically.

"I'm not . . . But do you mean to say you never hear from back home?"

"Back home? Standish Manor?" He stared. "You've forgotten, I'm afraid. You're the first person from Standish Manor I've spoken to, or heard from, in two years."

"Two years? So that's why you spoke to me! I might have known it."

"Perhaps I had no right," he said thickly, red and tingling. "But I—things aren't the same—I wondered if you'd speak to me——"

"What on earth are you talking about?" Astonishment brought her back from remote, embittered contemplation. "Why haven't you any right? Here! Let's get this straightened out. I thought you wouldn't want to speak to me. Why shouldn't I speak to you?"

He looked away, at the blue horizon.

"Well—you remember about me. About my wife."

"Your wife?" She was blank; then—"Oh! Didn't she . . . Did she . . ."

"She committed suicide."

"Oh, yes. I remember. But that was a long time ago, wasn't it?"

"Two years ago," he said. "I sold out and came South, afterward."

"Two years! Yes, that *was* a long time ago . . . I don't quite see——"

She stopped, belatedly tactful; he answered with stubborn candor.

"Well—it's a rather pointed—vote of want of confidence."

"Perhaps it is," she assented vaguely. With peevish irritation he realized that she didn't or wouldn't see what was so blazingly evident to him that it had blotted out the rest of the universe for two whole years.

"I'm afraid," she began, lightly apologetic, "that I've had other things to think about." Suddenly she was bitter. "If you've been away two years you'd better be posted up to date. Carl divorced me last spring for good and sufficient reason. No, you needn't guess, though probably you'd guess right. The sufficient reason was Marty Paine. So you see——"

"But," he mumbled, rather shocked by her uneasy bravado, "but that's no reason why I should have been—unwilling to speak to you."

"No?" She flushed under her light tan. "It was reason enough for a good many people around home. You see, we were caught. Very flagrant—and the news was trumpeted. The whole town knew it. Carl got his divorce like a shot, and I got my picture in the tabloid papers with all the details. And then Marty wouldn't marry me. Oh, I know it isn't required by the conventions, any more. But he wanted to marry me, *before* the divorce; I wanted to marry him, we'd told Carl and Carl had told everybody; and then when I was free he threw me over. He was kind enough to pretend that I wouldn't marry him; always the gentleman, Marty. But that didn't fool anybody."

"But surely," he protested, "that's no reason why they should take it out on you."

She laughed without amusement.

"They had to take it out on somebody. Really it was quite a scandal, for Standish Manor. And they couldn't take it out on Marty, for he got himself engaged to a widow with so much money that nobody could dare turn thumbs down. They had to agree that poor Marty had been victimized by a bad woman, and now a good woman was going to reform him."

"Yes," he conceded, "that sounds like Standish Manor. But Carl——"

"Don't worry about Carl. He's married again—already. He married Audrey Peters—you remember the Peters on Rutland Terrace? Audrey Peters—one of these devilish flappers that are raw sentimentalists under their skins. She'd jump at the chance to console a man she liked, if he'd been badly used by an abandoned wife. But I was the loose end; and since somebody had to be rebuked for this disgraceful affair—" She stopped, trembling, and forced herself back to lightness.

"Sorry—I don't suppose my scandalous history interests you as much as it does me. But you see I haven't spoken to anybody except maids and bellboys for so long that I've forgotten what one doesn't talk about . . . What are you doing here? Passing through to Havana, like everybody else?"

"No, I live here."

"Here? At the Casa Marina? But I haven't seen you——"

"No, I live on a key, forty miles northeast."

"I didn't know anybody lived on the keys," she said.

"Nobody lives on mine, but me."

"Like Robinson Crusoe! That must be rather nice."

"Not exactly like Crusoe. I catch my fish and raise a few vegetables, but I buy half my food in town. Robinson couldn't do that. And my shack is fitted with the rudiments of plumbing. Otherwise I've pretty well gone back to Nature."

"Glorious!" she sighed; then, flushing: "I suppose I sound like a schoolgirl, but I love the tropics—you can call the keys tropical, can't you—with the fervor of a convert. I'd never been in Florida till last fall, nor on the keys till I came here three weeks ago. I like the East Coast; but this—" She looked out at the sea, glittering under the sunset. "This is a new world. I'd meant to go on to Havana, but this is so perfect if you only want to swim and sleep and rest."

"Buy a key," he advised her lightly. "Nothing to do but rest."

"Oh, but I suppose you do something."

His face darkened.

"So far I've been busy saving my soul." He met her puzzled look with a shamefaced grin. "But I don't suppose my history interests you as much as it does me. You see, I haven't spoken to anybody but maids and bellboys and the like for nearly two years; for weeks at a time, I don't speak to anybody at all. So if I've blundered, said what I shouldn't——"

They smiled at each other, sure footing regained at last.

"Probably we've both put our feet through the glass," she observed. "We're a couple of hermits and we spill all we know to the first listener. But there must be topics of conversation besides one's own troubles . . . Funny we should have met like this."

He shook his head, smiling.

"Every winter dozens of people everybody knows pass through Key West. We were both sure to run into some one eventually."

"Well, at least each of us is lucky to have met another hermit. If one of us blunders the other blunders too; but maybe with a little practise we'll recapture the knack . . . See, they're going in to dinner. Come sit at my table, and we'll see if we remember what civilized people talk about."

In the sparsely populated dining room the head waitress had another table reserved for him; she politely tried to conceal her surprise at the discovery that he didn't want it. Mrs. Blanchard smiled drily.

"I'm the oldest inhabitant," she told him. "Most people rush on to Havana, but I've been here three weeks and never spoken to anybody before. So they probably think you're the person I've been waiting for."

He was thankful she was looking at the menu; he was afraid his sudden appalling reaction showed in his face. For one itching moment, he wished he had been the one she was waiting for.

He regarded himself with consternation and disgust. So this was what abstinence and solitude did to a man! He barely knew her, she was no more than adequately attractive, yet from his first casual contact with a woman of his own class there had blazed a raw, crude desire. Perhaps he ought to have gone to Miami after all.

Resolutely he took command of himself; surely if he had learned the lesson of the last two years he could put this nonsense out of mind. And to his immense relief, he found it fading as they dined and talked. Gradually he recov-

ered the normal mood of a civilized man dining with a civilized woman. He liked the poised aloofness of her manner, the dry realism of her point of view; a pity he had never discovered that in Standish Manor, where in years of superficial acquaintance they had never talked so much as this.

But perhaps the realism was a recent acquisition. She had drifted South aimlessly, he gathered, after Marty Paine threw her over, a silent, sardonic observer of the great Florida boom. From his own experience he could surmise that she had learned much, and painfully, in that dolorous Odyssey.

"I thought of settling in Miami," she told him, "but in Miami you meet people you know. Oh, perhaps I'm too sensitive; but even if they're decent one hates to be reminded. And Miami isn't tropical; this is. On the sand, in the sun, the worry and bitterness seem to soak out; one becomes a different person, in the tropics . . . You have. I can see that."

"Yes, I have, thank God; though I don't know that it was altogether the tropics. I went—back to the elements."

"Why not?" she sighed. "When I think how I lived for six years in Standish Manor—dinner parties, bridge parties, dances and golf, whatever the crowd was doing, always rush and worry— What a life! Who wouldn't run off to a key, if they could?"

Her blue eyes brooded darkly, but in a moment she had recovered and they were talking lightly once more; lightly, but alert and guarded. Afterward, they smoked on the cloistered porch; indoors an orchestra began to play.

"Dance?" she asked. "But of course—we've danced together."

"I haven't tried it since I left Westchester."

"Neither have I, but I don't believe we've forgotten."

They hadn't, as they discovered with a rather surprising delight. On this quiet evening they had the floor to themselves, and the last vestiges of his nervous uneasiness evaporated as they glided about with her light body gathered in his arms. He needed company, he perceived; he had been too much alone, had gone too far back to Nature. Surely after eighteen months of self-discipline he could risk an occasional passing contact with people of his own sort. To talk and dance and laugh with an attractive woman, to remember the long unpractised trivialities of placing her chair and lighting her cigaret restored his balance, relaxed his nerves, sublimated his accumulation of disorderly emotions. Briefly, it civilized him. It is not good for man to be alone.

But remembrance of the context of that maxim made him shiver. Not that.

Later they strolled on the lawn, on the beach, out to the end of the long dock. Restless, insistent, the sea splashed the piling beneath them; a long beam of rippling whiteness reflected the high-riding moon; in the uneasy water golden glimmers of phosphorescence rippled and went out. The breeze blew in from the sea, warm, moist, tropical, a breeze from lost islands where palms waved in the moonlight; but above the aroma of the tropics, nearer, more insistent, it brought to Mercer the subtle fragrance of the woman beside him. Again his nerves were on edge, but now with no raw craving; shivering, he recognized this new disturbance as more subtly dangerous. Her dry voice distracted him.

"Thank God I'm not in love."

"Why?" he asked.

"This is too beautiful. It would hurt too much."

"Hurt? Yes, I suppose so. I hardly remember——"

"You're lucky," she observed. "But there's no joy like getting over it—not even recovery from seasickness."

"You're over it, then?"

"Oh, yes—I'm over that. It took time. I moped like a sick cat last summer. But I don't mind now about Marty, or Carl. What I do mind——"

She broke off, staring at the moonlit waters; he spoke unwillingly.

"Don't talk if you don't want to. But if you do——"

"Whoever missed a chance to talk about herself—or himself? What I do mind—oh, I suppose it's only the shock to my pride. Losing them both at once. Marty did want to marry me at first—even after we were lovers. I ought to have told Carl then and got it settled as decently as possible. But I hated to do it, so I kept putting it off. Not very clever of me—but you see, it happened to be my first affair. So we drifted, and got caught. Very messy. And then when I was free—why, Marty didn't have any money, and I'd become a liability, with women not speaking to me, and all—so he threw me over. A clever woman could have kept him if she'd wanted him, and I did want him then . . . And Carl—he'd wanted me, once; a clever woman might have kept him too. But I couldn't. I don't seem to wear well."

"Oh, nonsense! If you don't want either of them now——"

"But don't you see? It's like a failure in business—the fundamental business of being a person. Losing Carl doesn't matter, or losing Marty; but to have lost my confidence in myself——"

"I know," he groaned. She looked at him sharply.

"Oh! Have you been through that too?"

"Why, yes. You know—about my wife——"

"Yes, a personal loss must be so much harder. But it's nothing to make *you* lose your confidence."

"Oh, isn't it?" Buried memories flocked back. "You don't know."

"All I know is that she killed herself. Worried about her health, wasn't she? That's all anybody knows."

"Why," he conceded after a moment of stupefied silence, "perhaps it is. I've been living with it so long that that never occurred to me. Queer. Yes, I lost exactly what you've lost. But I won it back."

"I wish you'd tell me how," she said bitterly.

"You couldn't do what I did."

"I'd try anything." Her voice carried conviction.

"You couldn't do that . . . Come—let's dance one more."

For he was afraid—of their relaxed confessional mood, of the moonlight and the distant music, of her fragrance that was too near.

HE WOKE early, sunlight and sea breeze flooding his white-walled room. One more day, but a day he anticipated with amazing eagerness; a day of civilization with a civilized woman who was reeducating him in the amenities. He lingered over breakfast but Mrs. Blanchard did not appear; he lounged in the lobby, reading the New York papers with listless indifference; of what concern was the news of the world to a primitive man on a forgotten island?

Unrest beset him, the more disquieting because it had, this time, no perceptible focus. He prowled on the lawn, on the white sands beyond the pine hedge; returning at last to find her on the porch, blue clad, smiling, golden sunlight on her golden hair. No doubt her smile was purely social, yet it set his heart knocking like a schoolboy's.

"I'm still learning to rest," she apologized. "Slept till ten and had breakfast in bed. Very reckless—I ought to save my money. When it's gone I'll have to go to work. No, I didn't get any alimony; I didn't deserve it and I wouldn't have taken it. I've got all I ever earned from Carl."

"Buy a key," he advised her. "I too must go to work, when my money's gone; but on an island it doesn't go very fast. Aside from interest on my investment, my living costs me about five dollars a week."

"Yes, but interest on an investment in Florida land——"

"The boom hasn't reached the keys. I bought my island, three hundred acres, for fifteen hundred dollars. And they gypped me at that."

"Even I could afford an acre or two at that price," she admitted. "But we don't have to go to work this morning. What shall we do? Swim?"

In the little white bathhouse at the corner of the lawn he rented a suit—tight over the shoulders, built for a city man, not for a primitive who fought sharks. It changed him altogether, he reflected as he waited for her with the chagrin of

Next Month

THE caprices of a beautiful theatrical star, and the exciting adventures of a much-in-love air pilot are most amusingly described by

JAMES WARNER BELLAH

formerly of the British Royal Air Force

in his story,

Sad Fate of a Pilot Who Drank Cocktails

a man who must appear poorly dressed before an attractive woman.

But she too was wholly changed in bathing dress—wholly and amazingly. It must be the color, he decided—the blazing flame color of her belted silk slip and the silken kerchief knotted about her head. A perilous color for a golden blonde, yet it harmonized with the wisps of honey-colored hair curling out below her kerchief, with the golden tan of arms and legs; harmonized too, he surmised, with something unexplored in her personality. Half nude, in that flaming garment, she looked primitive, barbaric, tropical—as if she would have been at home on Forgotten Key.

The splintery planks of the dock were hot under their feet, the wind was warm on their bare limbs; the mottled sea spread around them, purple over weedy bottom, green over sand, dusky blue above the distant depths. He dived into the warm shallow water; shooting forward with arms outstretched; she followed, but her impetus carried her hardly half way to him.

"Where did you learn to dive like that?" she demanded as she swam up.

"On my island—where I've learned all I know that's worth knowing."

"You're a good recommendation for your island."

Her admiration was frank and warming. He knew it was only elemental admiration for the physical prowess of primitive man, but he could never have won that in Standish Manor.

After the swim a sun bath. He sat beside her as she lay prone on the white sand, her head cradled in her arms; the sun beat down on them, hot, resistless, cleansing; the salt wind rustled in the fronds of the young palms inshore. As always, salt and sand and sun gave him a sense of relaxed completeness, an uncomplicated physical content. Purely physical, but not sensual, not even with the half-clad woman lying beside him; the elemental well-being of the one-celled animal, too primary for sex.

He filled his capacious lungs with a sudden deep inspiration, and the buttons on the shoulder straps of the rented suit flew off. Awkward, flushing, he tried to pull the inadequate garment together; she laughed lazily.

"Never mind—slip off the other shoulder and soak in the sun. All the men do it here. I wish I could."

He bared his torso; her blue eyes studied it, amazed.

"Brown all over! Why, you look like a life guard!"

He laughed, reminded of a world where men hired other men to guard their lives.

"I take it," she said, "that the well dressed man doesn't wear much on your island. Eden stuff. Quite right. Clothes are a mistake. They steal the personality."

"I wore them at first, but after I'd ruined a suit or two in the thickets I gave it up. So if you buy a key, hire somebody to chop paths through the dogwood and sea grapes. They'd tear your pretty things to rags. Though I don't suppose you'd mind rags with nobody to see you; women dress for other women, don't they?"

"Heaven knows why women dress, or do anything else. I didn't buy this bathing suit for other women. I bought it when I hadn't spoken to anybody but waiters for six months. I pretended I was buying it because I liked the color, but I knew better. When I put it on, at Palm Beach and Miami Beach, three or four men tried to pick me up every day; and I froze them all. Childish. Mean. Compensating my sense of inferiority, I suppose—turning them down because Marty had turned me down. Luckily people leave one alone here, so I'm exempt from temptation."

"Till I came along."

Her blue eyes glinted into his.

"Oh, you! I'd known you in Standish Manor. And yet you aren't one bit the person I knew there. I wish I weren't the person you knew."

"But I didn't really know you, remember."

"You didn't miss much . . . Ouch!" She drew her knee up suddenly and picked a burr out of the tanned skin. "Apologies to primitive man for my weakness—I suppose you walk barefoot over thorns."

"I'm not so hardy as all that. Rope sandals, usually. I even wore laced boots, when I was clearing the snakes out of the thickets."

"So you've got rid of the snakes?" He nodded; she shook her head.

"It doesn't sound right," she told him, "an Eden without snakes. They don't come that way . . . Come—it's time for lunch."

IN ROCKERS on the porch, they lounged lazily in the afternoon sunlight. But again he was obscurely restless——

"Feel like another swim?" he asked.

"It's too shallow with the tide out. But we might take another sun bath."

Again they lay side by side in the pervading heat; again he was relaxed, contented—until he began to perceive that his satisfaction would be incomplete without her. Yet he wanted nothing of her but her company; and mere loneliness he had fought and conquered in his first months on the island.

"I suppose you go back in the morning," she murmured.

"I suppose so," he admitted glumly. "It's where I belong."

"Be thankful you belong anywhere. I don't. I never did. Standish Manor bored me abysmally toward the end. Perhaps that's why I went crazy about such a poor thing as Marty Paine. To think that I've cried for hours when he broke a date, and came near killing myself when he wouldn't marry me— Not that it would have mattered much if I had."

His hand shot out and gripped her wrist with savage force.

"Here! Snap out of it! I did."

"You didn't have the same thing to snap out of." She sat up, her face crimson. "Oh, I'm sorry! Yours must have been so much worse—to lose some one you care for——"

"It wasn't that." Abruptly he decided to tell her; because it might help her, he assured himself. "Not so much. Amy—my wife—and I— Oh, we kept up a pretense of affection; but it was all gone, years before the end . . . What I fought through was exactly what you're fighting. Loss of confidence, loss of nerve; loss of any excuse for existence. And I beat it."

"How?" she demanded fiercely.

He laughed. "By killing sharks."

"Killing sharks?" she gasped. "How in the world——"

"With a knife." Instantly he saw that he had misunderstood her. But now her face was white; she shuddered.

"With—a—knife? No, no—never mind. Just a phobia of mine. Silly. I must get rid of it . . . Not with a—a butcher knife?"

"I'm afraid a butcher knife wouldn't do. The point has to be needle-sharp . . . But look here—if it makes you shiver——"

"Stupid of me." With an effort, she brushed away her shuddering horror.

"But how did that help you beat your troubles?"

He spoke with his eyes on the sea, his face turned away from her.

"Oh, my trouble goes back, far back; to childhood, I suppose. I was a weakling and naturally that made me a coward. I never did anything physical, anything that took nerve. And I went to work as an indoor man, a desk man. I was a desk man for fifteen years—auditing books, telling other men what was the matter with their business. I was a good enough accountant, but I didn't see what was wrong with me—till it was too late to help much.

"The war might have saved me—but I didn't go. They gave me a desk in the War Finance Corporation and told me I was more valuable there. Probably I was, to them—but not to myself. Because I didn't want to go; I was glad of the alibi. I'd never done anything hard or dangerous in my life, and the habit had grown on me till I couldn't. No guts, that was the trouble. Eventually I saw it. Amy saw it too.

"She loved me, in a way—the damnable maternal way that wants its object to be just thus and so, and is furiously disappointed if it isn't. If we'd had children she'd have turned it on them, I suppose; but as it was she had to build it around me. And when she saw what she'd been building around—well, I suppose you wonder why she didn't leave me."

"Oh, I understand—I've been married . . . Inertia—always hoping things will take a turn for the better."

"Yes, partly that. But she was religious too—without religion. She took marriage sacramentally. One man, one woman. And so our marriage was; in ten years there was never any other woman for me. It might have saved us both if there had been—at least she'd have respected me. But to be unfaithful would have taken guts . . . It might have saved her if she'd had a lover; but it was against her principles and she wasn't sensuous enough to forget them.

"So I went on—going in on the 8:37, coming home on the 6:22; working at a desk for other men, content with the hope of a partnership in ten years more; living with a woman who despised me and annoyed me . . . I don't know why it took me so long to see it; I suppose everybody else saw it first——"

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"Rubbish!" She broke in with angry sharpness. "Millions of men live all their lives like that; you were as good as the rest. People liked you——"

"Oh, we pretend to like the people we're thrown with—in the same office, the same club, the same suburb. But I had no real friends."

"Who has? And at least you're wrong about one thing. Nobody else saw that you were any worse than the rest of us. I think this was mostly in your own mind. The worst place for it to be, perhaps; but still——"

"In Amy's mind too," he said. "She began to talk about it—around it, rather, without ever getting to the point—and then something happened. You probably know the story."

"If I did I've forgotten it. I don't think anybody knew much."

"One Saturday afternoon," he resumed wearily, "we walked down to the village. She was in a shop and I was on the curb, watching a four-year-old boy, the bootblack's son, playing in the street. All at once a big car tore around the corner; the boy started to run and fell flat in front of it.

"I could have reached him; I might have saved him. Maybe I could have saved myself too, maybe not. But in just the critical tenth of a second when my conscious mind was blank, all the mental and spiritual and muscular habits that I'd been building all my life were holding me back, telling me it wasn't worth risking my valuable neck for a ragged little urchin . . . And then it was over; the wheels passed on either side of him as he lay flat; the car went on and he got up and scooted for the curb. I was thanking whatever gods may be when Amy came up beside me.

" 'I saw you,' she said.

"I didn't say anything; how could I? I hadn't tried to save this boy for the same reason that I'd never done anything else—because it wasn't in me. I knew it and she knew it. I couldn't stand the way she looked at me so I went off and walked over the hills. It was the one mistake that was left for me to make; when I came home the house smelled of gas."

"But—" her crisp voice was incredulous, "but she couldn't have done it on account of that. She'd been ill, hadn't she—nervous trouble?"

"Yes, she'd been ill; they used that to cover me up. But I knew. The only man she'd ever had, the only man she ever could have, according to her principles, was no man at all. No wonder——"

"Nonsense!" Her insistence was almost fierce. "No woman in her right mind would have killed herself for that. If she cared for you she'd have tried to help you; if she didn't care, what you did or failed to do simply wouldn't have mattered. Not that much, anyway."

"Perhaps," he admitted without conviction. "But you didn't know Amy. Anyway, I felt that I'd killed her; that in all decency I ought to kill myself. But there was one thing I'd wanted to do for years. I had an idea—you wouldn't be interested in details—about how inflation and overhead are likely to ruin even this scandalously rich country. I'd seen that in my work; it was desperately important, people ought to know it, but nobody was saying it. Well, it seemed to me that my worthless life would have some extenuation, that I'd be giving some return for the food I'd eaten and the clothes I'd worn, if I wrote that book before I put myself out of the way.

"But I couldn't stay around home, of course. I quit my job, dropped my life insurance, took the first offer for the house; we didn't have much of an equity in it, but by the time I'd paid the bills I had six or seven thousand dollars left. Plenty, for me. It was winter; my nerves were shot to pieces, so I drifted South—I'd always had an itch for the tropics. I traveled blindly, trying to get my nerves steady enough to write.

"One day, at a little port in Cuba, I was down at the water-front; sharks were swimming right around the dock—too close. I drew back, and somebody laughed. There stood a big water-front loafer who told me he'd kill a shark if I'd give him a dollar. I thought he was crazy, but I handed him a dollar automatically. He pulled a knife out of his waistband, peeled off his clothes, jumped in, ripped the nearest shark open, and climbed back before the next one could reach him.

"I was shaking with horror but he only grinned, shook the water off himself, and walked away. That poor fool of a roustabout was a better man than I; he'd do for a dollar what I wouldn't have done to save my soul, if I'd had a soul. And then it came to me that if I could do a thing like that I might home-brew myself a soul. That's how it began.

"Oh, it took time; it was months before I could even swim well enough to think of trying. I knocked about the keys; I was beginning to see that the tropics could give me something I needed. I ran across this island for sale—Forgotten Key—alongside a deep yacht channel where sharks hang around for garbage.

"I bought it from the conch family who'd lived there; I settled down—swimming, trying to get up my nerve. I hired a native to kill sharks for me—took lessons from him—swam at his side. And one morning I pulled myself together, went down to the beach alone, and tossed out a dead fish—and when a shark came in for it I went after him and got him. That's about all. It was hard—sickening—at first; but I don't mind it now. Nor anything else."

He sat up, proud of himself (he deserved to be proud of himself, he reflected, as he relived those months of agony); sat up and waited for her approbation.

"What would you do if your bait drew two sharks, or three?"

"Leave them alone. I'm not afraid to do that, now." He tingled with chagrin; unused to talking he had talked too much, talked foolishly.

"It seems hard on the sharks," she observed absently. "They get killed so you can save your soul. But maybe they don't care as much about your soul as you do."

"Oh, damn it!" he groaned. "I'm a boastful ass. I thought perhaps it might help you——"

"It has." She came back from her remote contemplation of other matters to smile at him, gravely, with a mature wisdom that made him feel like a child. "It's helped immensely. I couldn't do what you've done; I'm desperately afraid of sharks—and knives. But you've helped me because I've been just as bad as you—dodging and hiding, because I thought the whole world had nothing to talk about but my escapade with Marty Paine . . . Perhaps you and I aren't of such absorbing interest to other people as we think. Perhaps if we both went back to Standish Manor, some people would ask us if we'd been away for the week-end—and some people wouldn't know we'd been away at all."

His eyes came back to her presently; he laughed.

"You may be right," he conceded. "I'd never thought of that. But I'm not going back; my island suits me."

She didn't try to hide her envy.

"Ah, but I have no island, except this one; and the hotel closes next month. Still it's good to be reminded that one hasn't a patent on misery. Even I might find a soul, if I knew where to look."

HE DRESSED slowly, musing with resentment on her reaction to his story. He had been fiercely proud of that return from the depths; it seemed to balance the black years of shame that had gone before, to round out his life history in symmetry. And now a few careless words from Hilda Blanchard had disordered his whole scheme, had cast equal doubt on his shame and his recovery.

To Hilda Blanchard, Amy's death had been only the insane act of a sick and irresponsible woman; his life that had seemed so shameful to him had impressed her as no worse than the life of millions of other necessary and useful desk men, the backbone of the country. And on the story of his desperate recovery of his soul she had only commented that it must have been hard on the sharks.

Sullenly he came out of the bathhouse. She was gone. On the cloistered porch, in the hotel lobby, he couldn't find her. Just as well, he reflected moodily as he stalked up and down. Their intimacy had grown too rapidly; they had told each other things not meant to be told to any one—just because they were both off guard, both lonely, both ready to talk to the first sympathetic listener. And in consequence, now, he missed her—when they were a hundred feet apart, separated for an hour.

He damned himself whole-heartedly. Laboriously he had built a soul, an attitude toward life, a *modus vivendi* with the universe; alone on his island he lived in rounded completeness. And now that spherical symmetry had been cracked, his smoothly running existence had been deranged, by chance contact with a woman—the wrong kind of woman.

Casual women, in Miami or Havana, could be picked up and let go, without afterthought. But a woman like Hilda Blanchard would expect sentiment if things went on; and sentiment meant entanglement; for a woman like her and a man like him. He couldn't afford that, after his failure with Amy. He ought to go back to the island now, before sen-

timent entrapped him. Especially as it was no genuine sentiment—he knew that well enough—that kept him twitching and eager as he waited for her to come down to dinner. But a woman like Hilda Blanchard would think it was real.

But perhaps not. Perhaps, he tried to hope he was right, she was going to dine in her room, out of danger. But when he telephoned up to her——

"Just changing my clothes," she told him. "I'll join you in the dining room."

She came in late—as he sat over his coffee—in a plaited white skirt, a thin white silk blouse, her tanned shoulders showing through it. Awkwardly he tried to cover his uneasiness.

"Very pretty," he told her as he held her chair. "You look well in white."

She shrugged. "One must wear something. Clothes steal the personality but I don't lose much there. But you—" Her eyes wandered over his well cut flannels, his soft white shirt and black bow. "You were more effective on the beach. Here, dressed like anybody else, you seem—like anybody else."

He should have taken comfort from that, but he didn't. She was restless, too; she sat with averted eyes, her nervously twisting hands stretched out on the table before her. On her third finger an oval blue diamond blazed above a glittering platinum circlet. Of course—even a divorced wife kept her rings, like a defeated garrison marching out with side arms. But the sight annoyed him; it reminded him of a man, two men, to whom she had been more than a chance confidant. She sensed his disquiet and looked up, sullen and irritable.

"Don't wait for me, if you've finished. I won't be watched eating, like a lion in the zoo."

"Do we dance?" he asked.

"It isn't done on Sunday. But we can listen to the surf and look at the stars."

Perilous pastimes both, he mused; yet he waited for her.

Taciturn, they smoked in the moonlight, their eyes on the rhythmically winking lights on the distant reef, their unspoken thoughts on his near departure. They strolled through the gap in the pine hedge to the beach. Soft, urgent, the warm salt wind caressed their faces; their feet sank in powdery sand, snow white under the moon; in the hotel behind them distant violins sang fitfully above the whisper of waves on the beach, the harsh slatting rustle of palm fronds tossed in the wind. For all that his nerves were on edge, he felt himself melting into the mood of the tropic night.

"I'll miss—all this," he said jerkily.

In a stifled murmur she said what he had wanted to say and had not dared—

"I'll miss you."

"As a listener?" he asked peevishly, and got no answer but an impatient shrug. Her elbow was warm against his, her hair was fragrant. Breathing hard, he turned on her and seized her shoulders. Roughly he kissed her. For an instant she lay still and unresponsive; then her mouth sought his . . . She jerked her head back with a harsh laugh.

"Sorry—didn't mean to frighten you. But you happen to be the first man who's kissed me in eight months."

Sulky chagrin stirred in him, but returning desire overpowered it. He kissed her again, more gently, folding her close; again she withheld herself for an instant and then yielded, dissolving in hunger; again, gasping, she flung herself back, throat quivering, eyes angrily aglow.

"You were about to say you love me?" she jeered.

"No." He wondered if that was candor or caution. "I know one ought to say it, in the situation; but I don't love you . . . I want you."

"You want a woman. Any woman."

"No—no. I want you personally."

"Oh, don't pretend; you don't have to." Hatred blazed in her eyes. "We both need somebody . . . Very well. I'm any woman. You're any man . . . Never mind the polite preliminaries."

"No," he said with sulky stubbornness. He had a desperate feeling that they were misplaying the scene from sheer inexperience—the woman who had had only one affair, the man who had been faithful for ten years to a lifeless marriage. "Not if you feel like that, Hilda. I don't pretend to any particular sentiment; but I don't want you in hatred."

Her laugh, transparently, was a substitute for tears.

"I don't hate you; only—the situation . . . Oh, we're a pair of bunglers, you and I. You're out of the picture, here. Go back to your island, where you belong."

"Where I belong," he agreed savagely. "I wish I'd never seen you."

"So do I." She swallowed a sob; then, relenting, she laid her hands on his breast. "Oh, I'm silly, Glenn, I know. But any man who'd made love to me tonight might have made me feel as you did—any man . . . I'd like to go through with it, without any sentiment, any—reverberations. But somehow I don't seem able. You see, you'd be the second man."

"The second man? But how——"

"The second man is so much more important than the first. A woman can always tell herself she's in love with the first man. Because he's the first she can think he's going to be the last. But the second man—unless she's utterly wild about him—seems like starting a habit . . . I don't want that."

"You wouldn't start a habit. You're strong enough, sane enough——"

"*I?*"

Her acrid self-contempt cooled him suddenly. He knew why she was afraid; despite his craving, he liked her well enough to urge her no more.

Yet when they had parted he lay awake for hours, reflecting cheerlessly that probably she was sleepless too.

Not thus did primitive man conduct his love affairs.

HE WOKE at dawn and breakfasted promptly; before she came down, he had paid his bill and was gone. At the dock he tumbled groceries and kerosene cans into his launch. He was ready to cast off—and then he paused.

The island, alone? Unendurable. His eyes roved beyond the gray masts of the fishing port to the Havana boat. But the women of Havana wouldn't do; he wanted Hilda Blanchard.

No sentiment about it, no emotion. Examining his feelings with the dexterity

WE WERE IN THE MIDST OF AN HOUR OF ROMANCE

(Letters from Lovers: III)

"I found myself listening for the silver splashing of a fountain—the sound of a far faint voice from a minaret. I found myself looking for a lattice, patterned in the purple of the night—for a swaying lamp wrought in arabesques of orange—for we were in the midst of an hour out of romance—with you at the heart of its beauty."

IN HER DIARY

"His mood was so dreamy and tender. He had never been like that before. And yet—could it have been—the temple incense?"

To gain a richer loveliness from the very air about them, the exquisite women of other centuries used the mysterious spell of temple incense. That spell still exists, to exert its subtle power for women of today, in Vantine's Temple Incense. Exquisite odors, six of them, await you at all drug and department stores.

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born of long solitary practise, he was sure of that, and immensely relieved. They were congenial, they could be good companions so long as desire held them together. But now that desire had been called by name it had dropped the veil of sham sentiment. Of the deranging, distorting swirl of emotion that must fuse desire and liking into the compound called love, there was no trace. Conviction of safety gave him confidence; he wanted her, and this time he would get her.

Time stood still while he came back from the dock to the hotel. In the lobby, on the lawn, he sought her in vain, to find her at last on the beach, slim in her white frock, staring out over the water.

"Hilda!"

She turned, with lifted brows; her eyes told him that she had known he would come back. And now he felt none of the stormy emotion of last night, only a deep quiet certainty.

"Well?" she asked.

"I've come back for you. I want to take you to the island."

"To the island?" She smiled slowly. "Clever. You knew I liked you better as primitive man on the beach than as civilized man in the hotel. You knew I wanted to get back to the elements. On an island alone, where we'd feel clean and free—that's better. Very clever."

"Clever be damned. You'd like my island. You could rest, relax——"

"No need to raise the bid. This isn't an auction." She was lazily good-humored; in spite of himself he grinned.

"I want you personally," he told her. "Not just any woman. It isn't sentiment, but somehow no other woman will do. If I seem to be bidding it's because I know you don't want me personally——"

She laughed.

"Just any man, eh? Thanks. But I was mistaken last night; as it happens, I do want you personally. Not from sentiment, but because you're brown and hard and primitive and tropical—just what I'd like to be; but also because I like you, and in a way you're an old acquaintance even though we never really knew each other till day before yesterday. Somehow that makes it seem a little more —regular. And I suspect those are precisely the reasons that make you want me rather than some other woman."

"Probably you're right," he conceded. "What of it?"

"Not a thing," she told him in perceptible relief, "so long as we both understand it. We were a pair of fools last night—taking ourselves as seriously as if we'd just invented sex. But we need each other; and when we don't need each other any more we can shake hands —thank you and good-bye."

Now that it was settled he found himself shaking with relief. "You really mean it, Hilda? I don't think you'd be—starting a habit——"

"I'll take the risk," she said lightly.

"And you're not—afraid?"

She shrugged. "I can take care of myself . . . For how long am I invited?"

"For as long as you like."

"As long as *I* like? How about you?"

"Very well—as long as we both like."

"As long as we both like," she repeated. "Remember that. For you know that Carl threw me over and Marty threw me over; and I'm afraid you're a gentleman. If you got tired first— Oh, yes, it might easily happen. I don't seem to wear well."

He broke in with angry protest, but she silenced him.

"Don't be silly; you know it might happen. And if it happens, it happens! Glenn Mercer, I won't go unless you give me your absolute promise that if you get tired first you'll tell me and send me off—no politeness. Promise?"

They shook hands on it, the merest touch of tingling fingers.

"That's a contract," she reminded him. "And this is a favor—the only one I'll ask. Please don't kill any sharks while I'm on the island."

"Why not? There's no danger now."

"Maybe not; but it would do things to my nerves, all the same."

"All right," he conceded. "I can do without my daily dozen, for——"

"Say it." She laughed at his sudden embarrassment. "For so long as we're together. God knows, we don't want to take this like a marriage."

"You're a wise woman," he said softly.

"I've had an expensive education . . . So it's agreed—till one of us gets tired, and no sentiment? You must never say you love me, remember."

"Isn't that going rather far?" he protested. "It's—part of the ritual."

"I suppose it is. But don't say it outside the ritual, because it isn't true . . . I suppose a suitcase will hold everything I'll need on the island, won't it? I can leave my trunks here—tell the hotel people I'm running over to Havana. All right; I'll try to hurry."

YET it was mid-afternoon before they embarked. The packing of the clothes she was to leave behind her took time; and they had to stop downtown to buy bits of her island costume—rope sandals, a cheap conical straw hat. By that time, neither of them was trying to hurry; they were having too good a time. After the superheated intensity of last night, the cool practical negotiation of the morning, had come a mood more comfortable than either—the light affectionate gaiety of the surface aspects of a honeymoon.

They lunched at a restaurant on Duval Street, their hands clinging, and breaking away, and returning to clasp once more; and then at last to the dock, and the launch that waited. He gave her a hand; as she jumped down beside him she kissed him, with airy exhilaration."

"That's for luck, my dear."

She felt, with a curious apprehensive chill, that they would need luck, as the launch picked its slow way out through the fishing boats, and rounded the long dock where the trains from New York came down to meet the boats for Havana. Land's end—the jumping-off place; and she and Glenn were jumping off, out of today, out of civilization, back into the primitive.

The blazing sun beat on their backs as the launch headed northeastward across the glittering sea. Glenn, coatless and silent at his engine, seemed not to feel it at all; but it burnt through the thin silk of her blouse till she had to draw her heavy coat over her shoulders, its fur collar turned up to meet the downward sweep of her hat.

Far to the right the chain of the keys dropped behind them, flat, dark green on the blue water. The launch chugged slowly through the windless afternoon, over glassy shallow seas, between low-lying islands, beveled banks of mangroves with cocoa palms flaunting their pinwheel branches above. Not apologetic drooping palms, such as she remembered on the East Coast; here they stood erect, flinging their feathery arms upward and outward with savage tropic bravado. Mile by mile, as key after key faded behind them, she could feel civilization dropping away, losing itself beyond the horizon.

She dozed, nodding in the heat, and woke at last with a start when for the first time he spoke.

"There it is—Forgotten Key."

She sat up and stared around at an empty sea, ahead at a distant dark green bar on the water.

"It looks so tiny!" she exclaimed.

"We're still miles away. You'll find it's big enough for two."

Behind them a peach-colored sun was settling down on the ocean's rim, its lower half bulging sidewise as if a great unseen hand were squeezing it. The sea lay smooth—a band of azure, a band of cream, a band of opal, a band of slate; a flock of pink clouds floated above, mirrored pink in the water beside them. Twilight closed in, the dark green bar drew nearer; eastward, the ocean's rim was a strip of milky white between blue-gray sky and blue-gray sea. The island rose before them, spread out on either hand—tangled mangroves huddling in the water, palms rising defiant, barbaric.

Offshore, they ran along the reef till a band of blue showed through the uneasy green water, then down the blue strip into the cove, toward the gray unpainted dock. Ghostly, silent, a great white crane flew above them and vanished into the darkness of the bush. And then the landing, the silent walk up the path through the thickets, her stifled gasp of delight as she saw the gray house in the grove of palms.

She had been wondering on that long journey if, at the last, they would really go through with it. This morning they had been so coolly matter-of-fact and sensible—perhaps too sensible. One needed, after all, an illusion, transparent though it might be.

She was still wondering, in this savage hut with civilized conveniences, as she made the toilet of a civilized woman adorning herself for her lover; as they dined on the screened porch, with candlelight on white cloth and silver, and the cocktails green-gold in their glasses. Perhaps at the last she might falter as she had faltered last night, and if she faltered he would let her go. He shouldn't, she reflected resentfully; but she knew he would.

NEXT MONTH—Hilda and Glenn face a most surprising climax to their adventure.

heartedly, even when off duty, to the job of dancing with enlisted men and to the writing of letters for such wounded but loving semi-literates of the A. E. F. as came within her sphere. All of which must be set to her credit, since in civil life, so to speak, Miss Fairman was accustomed to a good deal of leisure and a very great deal of money.

Steamer love affairs are apt to be pretty sharp and conclusive at best. There is a certain romantic finality about a vessel at sea. The theater of operations is definitely limited. Many a woman has embarked light-heartedly on an ocean love skirmish, only to find herself cornered by a determined and desperate man, her line of retreat cut off at the engine room, and Sandy Hook still two days away. In such cases there is nothing for it but to accept the man—or push him overboard.

Now young Dr. Kenneth Boyden was determined, but he did not have to be desperate. For to do the girl justice, she was just about as crazily in love with Kenneth as he was with her. It was for both of them the old, mad, glad story of propinquity and the meeting of kind with kind after the long, dirty months of dreariness and drudgery. And so they plighted one another their troth and became very much engaged while Sandy Hook still lay three full days ahead.

But with the sentimental aspects of this courtship we can have no concern. It is enough to say that they behaved like all other young people who are deeply in love, only they had to hurry. Being engaged, and planning to be married at once, they had to go through the bothersome formality of trying to become acquainted. And they had only a few days to do it in before facing the family in Baltimore.

And so they landed in Hoboken, and the girl went home while Dr. Boyden went down to Camp Dix to get unscrambled from the Army. And presently he appeared in Baltimore and met the family, and gasped at the splendor of the lovely old house in the suburbs, and wished he wasn't so poor or she wasn't so rich. Also he indulged in a little orthodox self-loathing for having asked her to marry on nothing at all.

But this soon wore off, and they went flat hunting and furniture buying. They got a truly staggering check from the girl's father, and Ken refused to accept it, and they quarreled over it, and of course they did accept it—everything looked very rosy for a year or so ahead.

They had a big impromptu reception where Ken appraisingly shook hands with all the worth while part of Baltimore which he had only heard of from afar in his pre-war days. And everybody beamed on the big cool young doctor, and promised to come to him when they needed to be cut up. The great day was set, and the invitations got out with surprising speed. Telegrams and cables were sent far and wide. The house began to teem with dressmakers and florists and parcels and presents and caterers and telephone calls and decorators and bridesmaids; and Ken was able to see his fiancée for about ten minutes each day. And finally it came to the day before the wedding, and Kenneth came out to the big house to spend the last night of his bachelorhood.

Then they had a large night of rehearsing and merrymaking and well-wishing; and after the bride had been sent to bed, and the last giggling bridesmaid shooed out of the house, Mr. Fairman solemnly split a bottle of the old Burgundy with his son-in-law to be, and Mrs. Fairman kissed him and wept a little and in motherly fashion showed him to his room.

Now the philosophers will tell you that every effect has a cause, and that there is no such thing as luck. But we ordinary people know better. We know that Chance, the eternal hussy, is as spendthrift with her unearned rewards as she is profligate with her unjust punishments. Even the silliest of humans would not use a pile driver to crush a mosquito. But that is just what Dame Chance now did to young Dr. Kenneth Boyden.

AND that is why, after the motherly Mrs. Fairman had bade him good night and closed the door upon him, it was natural and inevitable that he should find himself in the room where two years before he had delivered a young girl of a child.

There was no mistaking the room. With its massive, ugly furniture, it had indelibly and forever photographed itself upon his mind. He had indeed scarcely thought of it from that day to this. But now it crashed down upon his memory as ruthlessly and as convincingly as though he had been there only the night before. And the bed—above all, the dreadful walnut bed, with its obese and unforgetable bas-relief baby angels on the headboard. It was no wonder that Dr. Boyden's shocked mind should leap to the obvious and the worst conclusion.

Dr. Boyden was in for a very bad night. After the first sickening shock of fear, he tried to pull himself up and reason things out. He tried to summon his coolness and imperturbability; he tried to call up his reserve of common sense. It was no use. He was in a sheer state of funk. He dug frantically into his memory to remake the past, but found that his trained faculty of observation was visual rather than mental. What he saw came back to him vividly, but he could not remember all that he had seen. In his passionate anxiety to convince himself that this must be a different house though the furniture was identical, he even tiptoed downstairs and counted the treads; but for the life of him he could not recall from two years back whether it was thirty-three or twenty-three or thirty-two steps.

HE WENT through every phase of uncertainty, of hope and of fear. At one moment it flashed on him joyfully that there were no brothers in the present family; but then he remembered being told that there were in fact two brothers one dead in the war, and the other now on a diplomatic mission in Japan. That made it worse. Then, an hour later it came to

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him with a rush of relief that this house was but twenty minutes run from the center of the city whereas on that fatal night they had driven at least a hundred miles from Baltimore; but an instant later came the sickening conviction that the careful brothers had doubtless driven him many miles into the country, and back again to this very house.

And so it went on through the night. After a time Kenneth became mentally exhausted and numb. He started to lie down so that he could at least relax his muscles, but recoiled in nervous terror as his hand touched the bed. The dawn found him asleep in an arm chair, crazily dreaming and twitching.

A shaft of sunlight awoke him. He came to with a start and the whole dreadful thing began all over again. It was a haggard and pitiful bridegroom who faced his wedding day in this chamber of horrors. He had no plan, he had no idea of what he was going to do—except that he must go ahead with his marriage; for he knew nothing, he only feared. And even if he knew, what would he do? To this he had no answer. He only knew that he loved the girl passionately. He doubted her, God forgive him, but doubting, loved her none the less.

At this point Kenneth showed his mettle. He took off his clothes, shaved and jumped into a cold bath. He dressed again, left the house quickly and went for a long, fierce walk. But he could not walk away from it—his thoughts came rushing back to the black walnut room.

For the hundredth time he tried to reconstruct the scene as he had been led blindfolded up the stairs that night. He remembered counting his steps in the hallway, he remembered the pause and whispering outside the door and the servant as she passed him in the dark—stop—why did he say servant? He had not seen her and she had not seen him. It was a woman, it might be any one—and yes—by the living God—wasn't there a sister somewhere? Hadn't Mary herself spoken of her as married and living abroad? And hadn't he heard Mrs. Fairman say something about a cable from Isabelle saying she would be back in time?

Oh, God—if it could only be true! It must be true. Why should he have assumed that the woman in the dark hallway was a servant? Utter fool that he was—that was the last place they would have let a servant go on that night. And it was the one place above all others where a loyal and devoted sister would be until a doctor arrived.

He was nearly certain now there was a sister—oh heavens—why hadn't he listened more carefully? But he would soon know—at breakfast he would find out. It all depended on the sister and on when she had left Baltimore for good. And at this reflection doubt crowded back upon him again.

Now it is easy to say that Kenneth should have had faith in the girl he loved. But the medical mind is notoriously prone to believe the worst of everybody. At all events, what Kenneth Boyden wanted more than anything else in the world on this—his wedding morning—was not his girl, but his girl's sister, if there was such a person. He wanted to see such a woman in the flesh. And then he wanted to peer at her, and read through her, and worm out of her the drab secrets of her girlhood and prove to his own final satisfaction that she and no other had been the girl in the walnut room.

When he reached the house the family was already at breakfast. Opposite his fiancée sat another girl, still in hat and traveling suit. The family explained casually that Isabelle had turned up on the night train from New York, boat late in docking and all that.

But there was nothing casual in Kenneth's greeting. His manner was so effusive, so avid, so almost voracious that even the preoccupied Mrs. Fairman noticed it. Isabelle accepted his attitude with a quizzical, continental lift of the eyebrow. But Ken didn't care what they thought, not even what his Mary thought—that would come later. His present business was to devote himself to Isabelle and find out all he could. He devoured her with his eyes. Physically she was a duplicate of Mary. A twin, obviously. But why hadn't he known it? A curious, vague family this.

"I never knew your sister was a twin; in fact I scarcely knew you had a sister."

"Don't be silly Kenneth, I told you all about her on the steamer," said his betrothed.

"Perhaps you did—but I don't remember," said Kenneth foolishly. Isabelle was looking at him narrowly.

"My dear Doctor, haven't you learned yet that the Fairmans are the most secretive family alive? And I've been away for a long time."

"Yes," echoed Mrs. Fairman softly, "a very long time; years and years and years, it seems to me."

Kenneth's heart sank. Was that a figure of speech, or a measure of time? More than two years meant hell to him.

"I don't call eighteen months a very long time," observed Mr. Fairman urbanely. "Let me see, Isabelle was married in August of nineteen hundred and seventeen, and that makes just——"

"Thank you, sir," exploded Kenneth insanely.

"Eh?" said the nonplussed elder man.

"I don't think my marriage is a very interesting topic today," Isabelle broke in sharply. "Now mother, where are you going to put me? May I have my old room?"

"No dear, I had to put Kenneth in your old room."

"Ah," said Kenneth leaning close to Isabelle and speaking meaningly, "is the room I am in your old room?"

"Whatever possesses the man? Of course it's my old room, why shouldn't it be? And it's Mary's old room too, if you must know. She and I lived together there our whole lives until——"

"Yes," snapped Kenneth. "Yes? Until what?"

"Why, until—" Isabelle seemed to hesitate, or was it only his gloating hope? "Why, until I was married, of course," she ended serenely.

How he got through the morning he never afterwards knew. He was no nearer the truth than before Isabelle arrived. These two lovely girls had both been in that room. One of them had gone out, an innocent woman. And one of them he was going to marry on this day. But which one had gone out? And which one was he going to marry?

For the next few hours he clung desperately and doggedly to the married sister. The household, in a whirl of last minute preparation, paid no attention to them. Mary had been whisked out of sight and was in the hands of her mother and her maiden attendants. He was not to see her again until—dear God—he met her at the altar! Isabelle was his only hope. He followed her about, he carried her luggage upstairs, he unstrapped her trunk, he helped her arrange flowers and open belated wedding presents. He did a hundred things for her, and he never left her side.

And at last, when he could think of no further pretexts, he cajoled and teased and finally half forced her into taking a walk into the country with him.

Let us pause to observe once more the machinations of that capricious jade Chance. Having watched a worm of a mortal squirm on the hook for a sufficient number of hours, she now began, wanton-like, to tire of the sport.

So Chance decreed that Kenneth and Isabelle should walk into the country together, and that Isabelle should cut her ankle quite badly while crawling through a barbed-wire fence.

When Dr. Boyden saw that the girl's foot was really cut, and not merely scratched, he told her to sit down and pull off her stocking. Then he tore a clean handkerchief into strips, and improvised a passable bandage.

As he turned the foot in his hand to adjust the final knot, he saw, just beneath the delicately curved instep, a large brown mole, the size of a five-cent piece.

It is too often the insignificant seeming things of life that make us—or mar us. Had Kenneth's memory been as keen as his power of observation, he might have saved himself some hours of agony. For he had seen this mole before. He had seen it two years before. He now remembered the great brown mole as vividly as last night he had remembered the walnut bed itself. He cursed himself for a feckless fool—to have forgotten the one eternally identifying mark on the body of the blindfolded girl in the walnut room; the one forgotten thing that had now proved to him finally the innocence of the maiden he was to marry.

Dr. Boyden was well-nigh mad again. But this time it was the madness of joy and self reproach. He laughed, and then he cursed himself and his lack of faith. And Isabelle looked at him queerly. And then he laughed again, and some tears ran down his face, and he leaned forward and kissed the foot he had bandaged.

And Isabelle smiled—a tolerant, European, married-woman smile.

MARY and Kenneth were married that afternoon. The next morning, in a hotel bedroom, the doctor lay luxuriously in bed and watched his wife as she sat before the mirror doing her hair. His eyes traveled fondly over the girlish figure and came to rest on a large brown mole the size of a five-cent piece just beneath the curve of the delicate instep.

Clare knew she must penetrate the cloud.

"Not quite so—bald—as that. He has paid you a very nice compliment. He has asked you to help him paint the picture. And not a bad game for a woman to dabble in, with frocks for your paints, and flowers, and the way you sit at the head of the table, and wear your furs. It's up to you, my dear."

Mary looked a little plaintive.

"But surely—it means more than that?"

"Of course. Don't be a goose."

So Fream's future wife found herself expressed in clothes, just as he wished one of his possessions to express itself.

She did not go down again to Cinder Town; she did not want to go. She was to be married from Caradoc.

She had various letters from her mother, and in one of them Mrs. Charlotte mentioned Furze: "It is still terribly dry here. I'm afraid poor Mr. Furze is having a hard time with his cows. No grass, and he had three cows sick. The poor man looks quite worn out."

She felt a little stab of self reproach. Poor Arnold! But then, why be a farmer? It was a horrid, worrying, lonely life, and she could not understand any man choosing it or loving it.

Poor Arnold! Why didn't he sell the place and try to do something easier? She did not know that there are men who do not ask for the easy things.

Nor were things easy for Furze. He went about looking lean and self-absorbed, with his blue eyes sunk deep in his tanned face. His temper was short; he was thinner, and not only in body but in soul.

Things had gone wrong with him before; he had had wet seasons instead of dry ones; but he had pulled through them with an indefatigable patience that had somehow contrived to find a smile. But this fight found him smileless. He cursed, and endured. He watched his meadows turn brown, and his stunted root crops starving in the baked fields. He had two more cows sick with mamitis; the milk yield was falling off; he was having to buy feed.

Furze was not avaricious, but in his darkening and difficult moods he did grudge the money spent upon the house to prepare it for that dream wife of his. He needed money now, and he needed it badly. Gore Wood would have to bear the brunt of the attack. He grudged the selling of those trees.

He had ceased to sweat. His skin felt dry and hot, and he was conscious of an inward dryness, an irritable and parched discontent. He got up tired, and slogged through the day with savage surliness. His attitude to men and things—and women had changed, yet he did not realize the change. It was just that he was worried and overworked and unhappy.

Lesser disharmonies revolved about the central disharmony. Hard work can keep a man's thoughts from women, and, till the coming of Mary Viner, Furze had lived as he had lived during the war, with mind and body so fully occupied that the sex in him had slept. But with the coming of Mary the essential male in Furze had been stirred to wakefulness. He had desired her cleanly and wholesomely, from the very deeps of him, with a devoted fineness, and a strength that could be very tender. He had been the big, romantic creature seeking a mate. His love had had finality, like his love for his farm.

She had humiliated both his loves. He had tried to put the thought of her away, but he brooded. He would wander about at night, restless and overtired, thinking of her and of the things that she had denied him. She had let him go so far, pressed the fruit to his very mouth before snatching it away. The mere sensuous thrilling of body against body, the clasping of hands—yes, he asked for more than these. He craved that spiritual and emotional contact that transcends the mere physical relationship. He was very lonely.

His loneliness turned fierce in him. There was that stifling night when the farmyard pump had refused suction, needing a new leather, and he had had to carry all the water for the beasts from the house. He had come in to see that pink luster tea service neatly arranged on the table in Mrs. Damaris's parlor.

He remembered that he had paid three pounds for that tea service. A sudden anger had possessed him, and he had taken the pink luster piece by piece and thrown it through the open window to smash against the garden wall.

And next morning, feeling a fool in the cool hush of the dawn, he had been compelled to go out and pick up the pieces and bury them in one of the flower beds. There were no flowers in the beds now. They were dead.

During all these weeks Furze never touched his piano, for music could say things to him that he did not wish to hear; also he was too tired and his need was the sound of a human voice. He was as starved as his fields. He wanted to talk and he had no one to whom he could talk, for he went very rarely now to Green Shutters.

That loneliness should breed restlessness was inevitable. He came up against the mirror in Mrs. Damaris's parlor and saw himself with a three days' beard on his face, no collar, an old shirt torn at one shoulder and a pair of braces that lacked one of the leather button loops. He was shocked at his own slovenliness. It was the slovenliness of a man who had become the slave of the soil. And suddenly he rebelled. Why grow like a dull beast?

Will was passing across the Doom Paddock, and Furze hailed him from the window through which he had thrown the pink luster tea service.

"Will."

"Ssir——"

"You might do the milking and the watering. I'm going up to Carslake."

He went upstairs and shaved himself and put on a clean shirt and collar and a brown tweed suit. He even hunted out a colored tie. He dressed his restlessness and his self-esteem, and slipped a pound note and some odd silver into his pockets. He was going up to Carslake, but with-

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out any definite ideas upon the possibilities of its dozen or so shops and its George Inn. Anyway he would be among his fellow humans for an hour or two, clean and decently clothed, and able to look a woman in the face.

It was a hot evening, and in Carslake High Street a thirst asserted itself. The George was a good old inn, well managed. It was kept by the Lavenders, a father and a bevy of pleasant daughters. Why not go in and dine at The George?

How sick he was of salt bacon and corned beef, and boiled eggs and tea. He crossed the road and went up the three well whitened steps into The George. The coffee room was upstairs on the first floor, and as Furze went up the stairs, which were narrow and rather dark, a young woman who was coming down in a hurry with an empty tray nearly ran into him.

"Sorry, sir."

She smiled. She had very white teeth, very black prettily bobbed hair, and eyes that looked dark and large in a white and broadish face.

Furze smiled back at her.

"My fault. Can I have some dinner?"

"Of course, sir."

He drew aside to let her pass, and she went by as though she was quite conscious of the man in him, and so made the man in him conscious of her.

He saw the white tables and the silver, and the flowers in the vases; the old red houses of the High Street out of one window, and out of the other the green oaks of Carslake park. The girl was back in the room. He had not seen her at The George before; she was not one of the Lavenders.

"Where shall I sit?"

"Where would you like to sit, sir?" She had a pleasant voice and smiled without boldness. "By that window?"

"Yes."

There were only three or four people in the room, motorists spending the night. Furze sat down at his table, and as his fingers touched the starched white napkin he felt a little thrill of sensuous pleasure.

"I'll have a pint of draught ale."

"Yes, sir."

She brought him the menu card. She was a big, strong girl with a splendid throat and neck, but she moved lightly.

"Thick soup, sir. And roast beef or cold veal and ham pie?"

"Oh—roast beef. And plum tart."

"And cream, sir?"

"Yes, please."

She was a most efficient waitress, quiet in her movements, and with a dark dignity of her own.

"Not quite so hot tonight."

"No, sir."

She studied him as she held a vegetable dish. He was one of the brownest men she had ever seen, a comely man, a gentleman farmer—obviously.

"Haven't been here for a long time."

"No, sir."

His suggestion was that he had not seen her before, and she caught it.

"Motoring, sir?"

"No. I farm. Doomsday; down the Melhurst road."

"I don't know much about the country, sir."

"Not been here long."

"Two months," she answered quietly.

That was about as far as they got during the dinner, but Furze's eyes were following her half shyly about the room, and though she met his eyes but once she was very well aware of them. He was a fine, big man, big without being too tall. She liked his eyes and his hands, and the way his hair grew, and the deep brown of his face.

"May I have some coffee?"

"In the lounge, sir?"

"Please."

She brought him his coffee. There was no one else in the lounge. She poured out the coffee for him and seemed about to go, but paused for an imperceptible moment. He spoke:

"My—my name is Furze. And may I have the bill?"

She brought him the bill, took his tip in one of her big soft hands, and gave him one intent glance, half smiling, half wise.

"Thank you, sir."

He did not find out her name that night.

CHAPTER XIX

A WEEK before her marriage Mary fell into one of her panic moods. She realized that she was marrying a stranger. The wheels of her triumphal car wobbled and quivered, and her pretty self came down in agitation at Clare's feet.

"I feel so responsible."

Her panic was obvious, and her sister's cool and world-wise hands had to comfort her. Mary had made no new discovery; you married a stranger when you married a man.

"Your man is kind, my dear. He is not a cub in a hurry."

Mary was ready to agree that her grandee was kind, but she found it difficult to describe his kindness. It was rather like a wet sheet or an ice-pack. He was so completely the correct lover of mature years; he would bend stiffly from the hips to kiss her hand; he seemed better at kissing hands than kissing lips. In fact there were times when she had the feeling that he was afraid of her, though what he could fear in her was beyond her comprehension. Yet his kisses were tentative and self-conscious, as though he were thinking about the quality of his kissing even when he was in the midst of it.

She was a little bewildered. She still thought of him as strong and silent and Spanish, and she had held her breath and waited for the fire beneath to reveal itself. She had been mesmerized by a mystery, by a little god of her own making, but her deity continued to be grandly inarticulate and benignantly silent. It was a shy and obscure god.

That she had fallen in love with his possessions, his atmosphere, she would not allow. No, no! Val was a dear. He might be a little difficult to understand, but surely all strong, deep men were not easily fathomed? And she had begun to feel so dependent on him; she was the eternal vine, and he was the post to which it was her fate to cling. A post! Just that.

"Oh, Val—I do want to make you happy," she cried out once impulsively.

She sought to cling, and he was as stiff as a post, a martyr's stake. For the piece of wood that was Fream yearned to become the young tree, and hoped that the miracle might happen, and was afraid that it would not happen. And the very fear inhibited the transformation, and he continued to be the post.

"Of course you will, my dear."

He tried to tell her that it was her happiness that mattered, patting the middle of her back with a hand that was like a stuffed kid glove.

"I hope I can give you everything you want?"

But could he? And what exactly did she want? And how much of it? Oh, the pomp of the body, that fine flamboyant pride! The ruddy countenance that is not to be bought! How little did she know that he was in a greater panic than she, a shameful panic. She could not see him sitting in his padded swivel chair in the oak-paneled private room in his London office, his face as blank as a sheet of unruled foolscap. What a gamble for a man who had become little more than a calculating machine, or a company report! And yet she was a thing that he wanted to possess, a live trophy, a beautiful breathing statue. For all the statues he had collected were lifeless things, stone Venuses, marble nymphs. He craved the live possession, and he sat in his chair and was frightened.

How was she to know that a surreptitious-looking taxi took him one morning and deposited him outside the notable door of a notable healer in Harley Street? Stage fright, the sort of stage fright that is not talked about.

But Fream talked about the honeymoon. He found self-expression when dealing with values. Phoebus would take them down to Dover. He had reserved a cabin on the boat, and a sleeper for two, and a suite at the Cosmopolis at Monte Carlo. Certainly he could overwhelm her with values, food, clothes, luxurious living. If she wished to shine before other women she could shine. There was not a dress, not a perfume, not a precious stone that need be denied her. He talked a great deal about Monte Carlo, a great deal for him; he clung to that beautiful town as though in some strange way it could serve him. Yes, of course Mary must have her flutter at the tables. Later, if it pleased her, this Cinderella of the Suburbs, they would go on to Rome and Naples and Sorrento, and back by Florence.

And Mary would say, "Yes Val, how lovely, how perfectly lovely!" and would wonder why he was so impersonal and so courteous. For her wound was not quite healed; she still smelt the smell of new mown hay. Her heart cried out to this other man, "Oh, love me, Val, love me hard. Make me forget." She wanted arms about her. She wanted to surrender to the little god of her own contriving, to feel his grand silence opening and enveloping her in a wonderful mastery. Having cheated one man she seemed in a fever to surrender to the other.

So, the great day came, and with it her parents; old Hesketh in a very much ironed and pathetic top hat and a frock

coat that had lived on and off in camphor for the last thirty years. Mrs. Charlotte wore black satin. Mary wept a little, but felt better when she looked into her mirror and saw herself dressed. Downstairs Leslie had opened a bottle of champagne. He insisted on her drinking two glasses of it, while Clare pulled on her gloves and looked pale and very wise.

Fream, too, went to church on champagne. He remembered that other occasion when he had gone much more gaily to church to marry a woman. That had been in June, and this month was October, wet and windy with the leaves already falling. He felt in a deuce of a funk.

THE crossing proved a rough one; Mary was very sick and lay in her cabin, not caring how sick she was. Her husband desired to be kind, but unfortunately he was nearly as sick as she, and hating the sea and his own soul. A bad beginning. "Oh, Val, I daren't move."

He looked about a hundred years old, but Calais harbor had soothed his qualms. He had to take charge. He should have kept charge, and all might have been well.

"No hurry, dear. Straight to our train. Take my arm."

"Oh, Val, you haven't got a clean handkerchief, have you?"

He hadn't. He had thought of everything but that.

They survived the dog fight at the French customs examination, and made for the train with a sweating and jabbering porter all hung about with hand luggage. Their compartment was found in the train. Fream wanted her to come to the buffet and have some hot soup!

The nausea was still upon her.

"I couldn't, Val. I'd rather lie down. You go."

But he would not go without her. He tucked her up in a rug and sat down and watched her, though she was praying to be left alone for half an hour. She felt squalid. She was sufficiently recovered to be able to remember her appearance, and she yearned for a chance to accomplish those little niceties that mean so much to a woman. He had not the sense to leave her alone, but sat and stared, and every five minutes asked her with great kindness how she was feeling.

And would she like some brandy?

"No, Val, thank you."

She turned her face to the cushions, while over the wide French country, a gray sheet of rain drifted.

THIS was in October. In August, casting back six weeks, there was other rain, English rain.

The weather report had promised a continuance of the drought. So much for the experts. In the afternoon of the same day masses of white cloud began to sail the sky, mixed with little smudges of smoking vapor. When Furze saw these smudges an excitement stirred in him. If only the cloud canopy would form and break! He was out of bed at five o'clock next morning, and at the window.

"It will rain, it must rain," he thought.

And yet all through the morning, though the sky remained a dense gray sheet, no rain fell—not a drop. It was a sky of suspense, and Furze, waiting for the merciful rain, idled about unable to work.

Will was pumping water into the yard troughs.

"It must rain, Will."

"Maybe it will, ssir, maybe it won't. Any or'nary year I'd say it was going to drown us."

"Can't make up it's mind, damn it."

Furze wandered about the farm all the morning, gloomily hopeful. Well, if it did not rain he would go up and dine at The George and see Rose Hurley. He knew her name very well by now. At noon not a drop had fallen, and he went in to his dinner, and ate some bread and cheese, but could touch no meat, a wretched end of cold mutton with a few cold boiled potatoes to garnish it. He left the food and plates lying there, and went out again, and wandered. He kept pulling out an old silver watch. Two o'clock—three o'clock.

He was in the Maid's Croft when the first drops fell. He stood quite still, holding his breath. They came singly, big drops; and then, suddenly, as though some great hand had torn a rent in the canopy overhead, the rain came down in a gray sheet. The dry grass seemed to crackle and steam, and the cracks in the caked soil bubbled. Furze took off his hat, and let the rain run over his face.

Some one was coming up the path from Bean Acres, a figure blurred by the rain. The upper part of it was yellow, the lower part black. It was a girl. What the devil——

And then he laughed, for she came laughing towards him, her yellow jumper drenched, and a fringe of pearls hanging to the brim of her hat.

"What on earth are you doing here, Rose?"

"Getting wet."

"You are!"

"And you. Aren't you glad, Mr. Furze?"

"I am."

"My afternoon off. Thought I would have a ramble. My best hat and jumper have brought down the rain for you."

And with laughter and more than laughter in their eyes they stood and looked at each other, and to Furze she was the rain goddess, a strong, comely, dark-eyed creature with white teeth and wet hair. He saw a rain drop on her round white chin. She seemed part of the rain, cool and fresh and wholesome; a laughing, good-humored, warm-hearted thing. The blood stirred in him.

"You'll have to come in under shelter."

"I'm wet through."

"We shall have to dry you. You have brought me good luck, Rose, the first good luck for months."

Her dark eyes held his for a moment. "I'm glad."

CHAPTER XX

THERE was no fire in the house, but Furze brought an armful of dry wood and found her standing in her stocking feet, looking at dirty plates and the ragged end of mutton on the table. "Poor man," she thought, "no wonder he comes up to us sometimes." Her wet feet had

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left marks upon the red-tiled floor.

Furze threw the wood on the hearth.

"I'll get some logs. Soon have a blaze. You must be soaked."

"Right through."

She smiled over it. No words about spoilt clothes and a pulped hat. Her stockinged feet pleased him; why he did not know.

"I'll get those sticks alight while you fetch the logs."

"Will you? You'll find paper and matches in that cupboard."

She was bending over the fire when he returned, her wet jumper clinging to her body. Yes, she was a fine, strong girl, no flat-chested city wench. He felt too that she was good, if goodness meant warm-heartedness and pleasant commonsense.

"Splendid."

They soon had a blaze, and the shimmer of it was in her eyes and upon her wet black hair.

"Feel cold, Rose?"

"Oh, a little."

"Look here, girl. You must get those wet things off. I can rig you up with something or other while we dry all that."

"Can you?" She sat on her heels and considered.

"Yes. You go in here, and I'll collect something, and leave it outside."

She smiled up at him, and he opened the door of Mrs. Damaris's parlor and left her, going upstairs to search about for clothes. A tweed coat and an old white sweater. Yes, but what— No—not breeches. All he could think of was a couple of green linen curtains and a leather belt, and he carried the whole collection down and knocked at the parlor door.

"Rose——"

"Yes."

"It is a bit of a puzzle—the skirt, I mean. See what you can make of all this. I am going to get tea ready."

From the kitchen he heard the door open and close. There was a silence and then her voice called him.

"Mr. Furze?"

"Hallo."

"Have you any safety pins?"

"Safety pins! I don't know. I'll have a look."

He found one safety pin, and two gold pins that he used with his soft collars.

"All I can find. On the floor."

He had the tea tray filled when he heard the parlor door open, and when he entered the living room she was hanging her clothes on the backs of two chairs in front of the fire. She looked at him with a laughing coyness. She had made quite a nice job of the skirt, looping the two curtains over the belt, and pinning them together.

"You forgot stockings."

"Sorry."

He glanced at her bare feet. They were pretty feet, and few feet are pretty uncovered. They were very white.

"They look better as they are," he said, "much better than in a pair of socks. But you'll find those tiles cold; I can rig you up with some slippers."

"Oh, I'm all right," she said, and looked at the tea tray. Had he no woman about the place?

"Sorry I've no cake."

"I can do without bought cake. The only cake worth eating anyway is homemade."

He seemed to consider that a very pregnant saying, and stood looking for a moment at her feet, only to discover when he looked at her face that there seemed to be more color there.

"What about the kettle?" she asked.

"Rose, you are a woman of sense."

He went for the kettle with a deep look in his eyes, while she cleared away the debris of his dinner, and spread the clean cloth he had brought.

"Who washes up for you, Mr. Furze?"

"Oh, I have a woman in twice a week."

"And the other times?"

"I mess along somehow. Farming is not all violets."

"I know that," she said, arranging the cups and plates.

"You do?"

"My father has a small farm. Shall I cut some bread and butter?"

"Do," he said, and fell into a sudden stare, and came out of it with a smile of discovery.

"How do you like your tea, Rose? Strong or weak?"

"Strong, I'm afraid."

"So do I."

The moist rush of the rain continued. The orchard trees were dripping. Furze's face was all smoothed out, and his eyes had softened. Sometimes he would look at the rain and sometimes at the face of the girl. A farmer's daughter, was she! He had been thinking of her a good deal during the last two or three weeks but now that she was sitting there with her white feet tucked under her chair, and her clothes drying by the fire, and pouring out his tea for him, he thought of her in the same way yet differently.

"It's a hard life, Rose. Was it too hard for you?"

She looked at him wisely. "There were three of us, Mr. Furze, and three big girls are not wanted on a forty acre farm. Oh, I know."

"What do you know?" His seriousness had a touch of fierceness.

"How many pennies go to the pound. How much milk to a pound of butter. How many hours it takes to clear a dozen black-currant bushes."

She was not afraid of him. Her frank and handsome face had a smiling serenity.

"Soft words won't bring rain. No lying long in bed. Up early. Scrubbing brushes and milk cans. That's one thing about the soil, it does make you honest. You have to face hard facts."

His eyes became gentle. "Good girl. I thought all women wanted silk stockings these days."

"Why shouldn't they? If they work for them?"

"Ah, there you are. You have got it. Eve has not quite sneaked back into Paradise."

They laughed, and there was a mutual desire in their laughter. But the dreamer in him had had his lesson; there are facts to be faced when a man of the soil is for kissing a woman. He filled a pipe, deliberately, thoughtfully.

"Milking to do. If my fellow has not been drowned, he has fetched the cows in."

"You do your own milking, Mr. Furze?"

"Mostly."

"I can milk," she said.

He got up, and with a match to the bowl of his pipe, stood half turned to the window.

"I'll leave you to look after your clothes, Rose. And look over the house, if you like."

She nodded. "I'll wash up. This old place is lovely."

"Like it?"

"Not like a raw, new place. Been lived in—and loved a little."

He gave her a quick, deep glance. "Thank you, my dear; you're wise." He walked to the door and paused there.

"Mine, you know. But I am still having a devil of a fight to make ends meet, and this summer will hit me rather hard."

"For richer or poorer, Mr. Furze. That's a farm."

When he came back she had been all over the house. Her dark eyes had a consenting softness. She had seen things that had stirred the woman in her. "He's a man and a good one." She had warmed to the way he had treated her. No innuendos, no advantage taken. He was a man who could be gentle and clean with a woman.

Furze found her dressed, her black hair all crisped after its soaking.

"Sure those things are dry, Rose?"

She looked him straight in the eyes. "Dry enough, Mr. Furze."

She had cleared the table, and it seemed to him that the room had been tidied up. The clothes he had given her lay folded on the sofa.

"Been over the house?"

"Yes."

"Like it?"

She nodded.

He looked out of the window. It was still raining hard.

"I haven't such a thing as an umbrella, dear. But I can rig you up. And I'll see you as far as Carslake."

An old trench coat still dirty from bad weather hung from a peg on the kitchen door. He took it down, and helped her on with it, and buttoned her up.

"But what about you?"

"A sack, my dear, if you'll allow it."

Her eyes lit up. "I'd allow you anything, my man," they said, and he stood and met the light in them.

"Now then——"

But under the dripping hood of the porch the same impulse took them both. They held each other close and kissed, and went up the wet lane hand in hand.

CHAPTER XXI

MR. AND MRS. PERCIVAL FREAM arrived at the Cosmopolis Hotel in Monte Carlo about half past three in the afternoon.

Mary was very tired. Moreover, it was raining. A gilded lift took them up to the second floor, and a polite clerk threw open the door of their suite.

"Like it, dear?"

She said it was lovely, and felt suddenly and absurdly homesick in the midst of all this pink velvet and white enamel and gilding. The clerk had departed after assuring Fream that the luggage would

be sent up at once, and Mary stood at a window looking at the harbor of Monaco, while her man remained in the middle of the room austerely and awkwardly holding his hat.

"Sorry it's raining, my dear."

She could have wept, she was so tired. Also, as a woman she knew that much was expected of her — thrills, sighs, ecstasies, all the mysteries of the unveiling. And somehow she felt as flat as that gray sea.

"Do you think I could lie down, Val?"

"Of course, my dear."

They explored the suite. It consisted of a sitting room, a bedroom with two beds, a dressing-room and a bathroom, all in white and rose and gold. She wanted to be left alone, and he came and stood beside her in the bedroom and put an expressionless hand between her shoulder blades. He was trying to say something. She wished he would go away.

"Tired, my dear?"

"Yes, Val."

She felt his hand thumping her gently.

"Of course. Luggage coming up. Lie down. I'll ring for some tea. Lie down till dinner."

"Yes, Val."

"Feel better—after dinner. A little wine—you know."

Yes, he was very kind, but she was tired; both of them were tired. Tea arrived and seemed to be very tasteless. Fream sat and drank it solemnly. Afterwards she lay down on one of the beds, and two politely detached porters bustled in the luggage. Fream was smoking a cigar in the sitting room; presently she heard him go out. She tried to sleep, but found herself staring at the ceiling.

About seven o'clock Mary heard him return. She jumped up. She had duties to perform, and she felt lonely.

"Oh, Val, I ought to dress."

"Yes," said he with a queer, stiff smile.

"What shall I wear?"

His face expressed inward effort.

"Something pink, rosy."

She put on her rose and silver brocade, and heard him busy in his dressing-room, but even the sounds he made were restrained. She had a curious wish to hear him whistle, or drop something, and say "Confound it." The strong and silent were becoming a little too enigmatic, and she felt lonely, and a little conscious of another occasion when a man had loved her to the point of roughness. And yet it had been with a gentle roughness.

She brooded for three minutes, and looked at the two beds. Yes, it took two to make a marriage, and also an impulsive sense of nearness. But—if always—there was a gap, something unexpressed and unfulfilled?

They dined notably, with a very polite *Maitre d'hotel* presiding over the little pomps and ceremonies of the meal. An orchestra played. Fream should have had every cause to be proud of his wife. She was beautifully gowned; she showed a languor that might have enveloped the most admirable and experienced of worldlings; she was quite the prettiest creature in the crowded room. And yet that little pagan love-feast was without a soul. They were frightened of each other.

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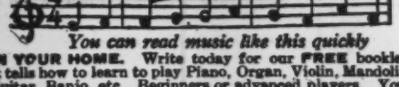

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"No, really, Val, no more thank you."

"It will do you good."

Certainly it made her a little more talkative, but her vivacity was pantomimic.

IN the morning she heard Fream moving, but she lay very still, pretending to be asleep, until the door of his dressing-room closed.

She was conscious of a feeling of humiliation, and of pitiful bewilderment. She sat on the edge of the bed, with a vacant face, pondering upon a shameful pity that seemed to well up out of the deeps. Such pity! She could see that the sun was shining, and she went and opened the shutters. Three old men, bent and black, with guitar, violin, and mandolin, struck up some Italian love song in the garden below. They looked up at her window. One, the oldest and most bent of the three, began to sing in a harsh and metallic voice, and at the end of each stanza he broke out into an absurd little shuffling dance.

What a serenade! Old age cackling and posturing down there in the sunlight.

During the days that followed she fell to a level of languid resignation. Never had she felt so tired, inwardly tired. Her bubble mystery had burst.

It could not be helped. She suspected him of being the victim of a humiliation far more final than was hers. He had gone about with the face of a man sick unto death; he had avoided her eyes; yet never had he been so talkative.

And such talking, disjointed, spasmodic, and yet continuous. He looked bleached.

She felt desolated, submerged beneath his misery, yet without fully understanding it and its final significance. She was immensely repelled and also helplessly compassionate. Never had she experienced such loneliness, and crying out in the silence for comfort she was kind to him because she felt that they were lost in the same wilderness.

She did not know that her kindness humiliated him to the nethermost deeps. They wandered about together like strangers, she a little bewildered and appealing, he with a sick, bleached face. He had discovered his own death, that he was not a live man, but just that which he had suspected himself to be, a manipulator of figures.

They went everywhere and did everything. An equal feverishness seemed to possess them both. Yet, all the while, she was seeing him vividly as she had never seen him before. She noticed that when he talked his conversation dealt solely with material things, objects and their value. He did not seem capable of expressing any sentiment, or of seeing beauty.

It shocked her. So did his renewed lavishness. He poured out money, and there was something in her that began to be offended by this lavishness. Could he not express himself in any other way? He sent her into shops and made her buy things, dresses, hats, jewelry, extravagant superfluities. Once or twice she tried to protest, "Val, I don't want it," and almost he seemed angry: "Suppose I can give you what I want." But the real anger was against himself.

They went almost nightly to the casino, and it was here that she began to suspect and to know the real Fream. He slipped into the chair left by a departing player.

"Care to watch me? I am going to have a little flutter."

She stood there an hour. The air of the place made her head ache. Fream was winning. She realized suddenly that he had forgotten her.

She slipped away, out into the clean air, and walked awhile before turning into the Cosmopolis. She went to bed. Fream came in about midnight. He looked both apologetic and self-pleased.

"Sorry to be late. When did you go?"

She answered brightly.

"Oh, I just slipped away, Val. You were winning, so I thought . . ."

His flat face had a sleek pallor.

"I won—ten thousand francs or so. That's my job, you know. Got a flair for it."

She had never seen him so animated; he seemed to have recovered some of his self-respect. If blood did not circulate—money did.

"Rather piques me, you know, beating the bank with the chances loaded against you."

Imperceptibly he drifted more and more to the casino, and she encouraged him to go. It gave her solitude, and she was astonished to find how she craved solitude.

At the end of October they reached Rome, and put up at the Russie. It was in Rome that Mary began to discover her husband's profound ignorance. That he should have but little French and no Italian was of no moment, and quite English, but that he should be under the impression that St. Peter's had been built by a Roman emperor was something of a shock to her. For, standing in the piazza, he had looked with his flat eyes at the mass of stone.

"These Roman chaps could build."

She was so astonished that she was tempted to believe that Imperial Rome must have produced St. Peter's.

They went to see the Coliseum by moonlight, and he stood beside her with an air of meditation.

"Think of the ghosts, Val."

"Ghosts!"

He lacked both fancifulness and a sense of humor.

"Wonder how much money their box-office took on a full night?"

After that she despaired of his aesthetics, and at the end of ten days she estimated his boredom to be as profound as was his ignorance. She went up to Montoro alone, and the terrace of the Pincio, and looked over Rome and wondered and felt sad.

For Mary and her husband had in the course of three or four short weeks agreed, tacitly, to shut the door upon the physical phenomenon of marriage. Emotionally it had been a fiasco, a humiliating incident in the lives of both. It was not discussed. They locked it up like a room in which some tragic event had happened. After all, there was the rest of the house.

The band was playing in the gardens, and she stood and looked towards St. Peter's. Yes, there was all the rest of the house, many things to enjoy, rooms which had not yet been opened or lived in.

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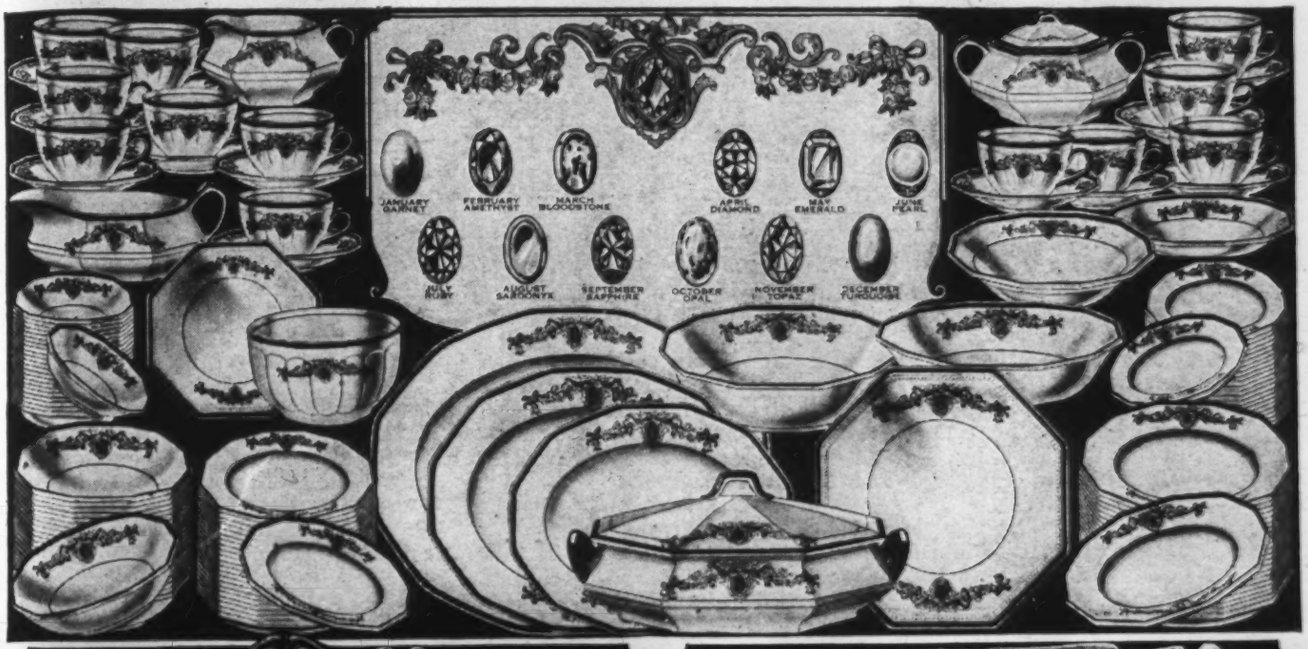

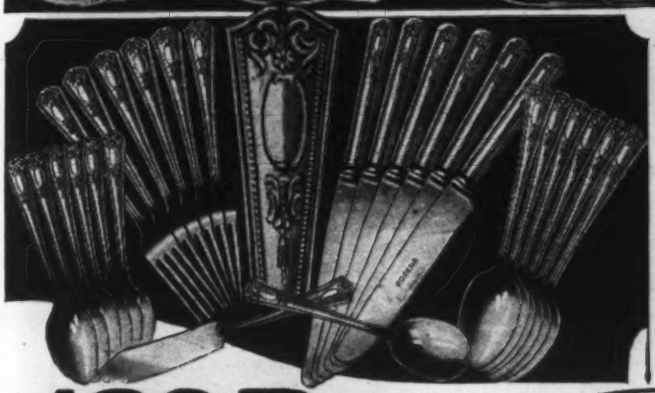

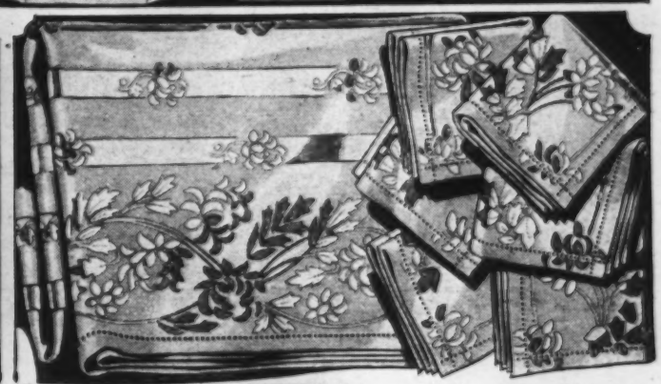

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12—7¾ in. Pie or Lunch Plates	1 Covered Vegetable Dish (2 Pieces)
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12 Cups	1 Sauce Boat
12 Saucers	1 Oblong Open Vegetable Dish
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	1 Bowl
	1 Open Butter Dish
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26 Pieces Rogers Table Ware

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6 Knives	1 Butter Knife
6 Forks	1 Sugar Spoon

Knives have French Shaped Blades

1 Table Cloth and 6 Napkins

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"It need not be so bad," she thought, and was shocked at her own acceptance of life's relativity. Her grandee had fallen out of his frame; he was a queer inarticulate king, an ignorant, money-hunting man. No, not quite a man——

She felt herself flushing.

She put a bright face over her misery, and turning to the Russie found Fream in the lounge reading a financial paper. He looked pleased about something. He told her he had just bought a couple of statues—marble, you know. They would look rather well on the terrace of Hill House.

A little, chilly sensation ran through her. She sat down.

"Wouldn't you like to go home, Val?"

His glasses glimmered at her over the top of her paper.

"Excellent idea. Matter of fact—I'm rather badly wanted in town."

"Let's go home," she said, but the word "home" had for her a sound of unimaginable dreariness.

Clare Biddulph had her first sight of Mary the day after their return to Hill House.

She came down to Caradoc in Phoebus, wearing a mink coat Fream had bought her in Paris. She looked older, and quite extraordinarily self-contained. She drawled slightly when she spoke.

Clare, unemotional creature that she was, yet felt a numbness.

"Well, here you are. Had a good time? But of course you have."

"Perfectly lovely." She looked not at Clare, but out of the window, and her composure was like a white veil. And she was daring Clare to lift it, defying her to lift it.

"A perfectly lovely time. Val had to come back on business. We had two days in Paris. He bought me these furs."

CHAPTER XXII

IN SEPTEMBER Doomsday knew a second greenness. With the last fortnight of August very wet, the resting soil, refreshed and eager, seemed to rush into a second growth. Furze had never seen anything quite like it. The Long Meadow that a month ago had been a stretch of cracked brownness lushed up into a young hay crop. Old garden flowers took heart of grace and set out to bloom a second time.

"A second spring—a second summer," he thought, but the man in him watched and considered.

Up at Carslake, girls, twittering under the old red roof of The George before blowing out their candles, spoke of the eternal adventure.

"Rose has a man——"

Furze of Doomsday, a gentleman lover! She was teased and she was envied, and she went about her work with the air of a girl who was wise and who had reason to be happy.

It was not yet tea time, and four o'clock on that particular afternoon, when Furze came up from Bean Acres and went into the house. He saw a woman's hat on the sofa. Also, the table had been laid for tea, and there was a cake on a dish, a real, live, home-made plum cake. He caught a glimpse through the open doorway of the floor of Mrs. Damaris's parlor and he realized that it was carpetless, and that the boards had been scrubbed. What the devil!

He walked into the parlor, but there was no spider there. The window was wide open, and through it he had a vision of a young woman, bare-headed and with her sleeves rolled up, folding up a carpet on the grass. A hazel rod lay near at hand.

"Do you call this a holiday, Rose?"

He climbed out of the window and jumped, and would have taken the carpet from her; but she stood back, and somehow gave him to understand that it was not to be touched.

"You are back too soon."

"How's that?"

"I wanted the floor dry and this carpet down."

He was thoughtful, but she seemed intent upon her job, not looking at him. She began to rearrange the furniture; he helped her, and she accepted his help, but without acknowledging it.

When the last chair was in its place his right arm slipped round her, and found her rigid.

"What is it, my dear?"

"What?"

"Something has hurt you. Tell."

But she would not tell him. She slipped away from his arms and into the living-room, and said that the kettle should be boiling, and that as she was a bold-faced jig she might as well make his tea. And at that he grew deliberate and gently determined, and got her beside him again, and spoke with his mouth close to her hair.

"You can tell me, Rose."

"No, I can't."

They stood touching, and all that he could think of was that she had not wished him to know that she was working in his house. And why? Did it look too much like a studied effect?

"I think I know," he said, "and thank you, my dear."

She looked very grave. "If you do know—well—you are not like most men. What about that kettle?"

He held her.

"Rose, no secrets between man and wife."

"I'm not that—yet," she said.

"You may be. I want you."

Her eyes were as dark as night.

"How much? No, I'm not a nasty, sly little bit of a girl. If I thought——"

"If you thought?"

"I'd never see you again."

"But you will. Because I know——"

"Oh, you think you know!"

"I do know."

He kissed her.

In the cool of the September evening they wandered over the farm together. They were standing under the old thorn hedge of Gore Wood and Furze's eyes were on the oaks, yellow in the evening sunlight. Many of them would have to fall that winter.

He told Rose that some of the oaks were marked for the sawmill. She looked grave.

"A pity to sell timber."

"It's necessity, my dear. I had a lot of things done to the house."

She stood mute and thoughtful for some moments.

"How much are you counting on?"

"Oh, I suppose a hundred pounds or so would set things straight."

She said very little as they came back by way of the Long Meadow. Her face had a comely, dreaming tranquility.

"It's a sweet farm," she said, as they turned into the orchard.

"It's my life, my dear. Come and share it—for better or for worse, for richer or for poorer."

And she gave herself to the hollow of his arm.

LOCKED away in a drawer in her bedroom at The George, Rose Hurley kept a little fiber case in which she stored her letters, a few pieces of jewelry, and a gold watch. Rose was eight and twenty, and she had been working for five years, and coming of country stock she had saved money. Yes, quite a pretty sum thanks to her tips which had not been lessened by a pleasant voice, dark eyes, and clean hands.

In this case she kept her Post Office book, and her Savings Certificates. She knew to a penny what she had, but that night she sat on the edge of her bed, and by candlelight considered her fortune.

Seventy-five pounds in Savings Certificates. Forty-three pounds in the Post Office. In all one hundred and eighteen pounds. Not so bad for a working girl. And she sat there in her nightdress and looked happy.

She had a surprise for him, dearly conceived, and carried out on her next visit to the farm. She sat on Arnold's sofa, and smiled at him. A brocade vanity bag lay in her lap. And he thought he had never seen anything more comely and pleasant. She had come between him and his Cinderella love. He had come to love her too, a little differently, with less passion perhaps, but with a more confident tenderness.

She smiled up at him. "Open your hands and shut your eyes, Jack."

She had chosen to call him Jack. Arnold was all very well, but Jack came more plainly and gently off the tongue.

"What's this? More cake?"

"Shut your eyes."

He humored her. He felt something unexpected placed in his hands.

"Open."

NEXT MONTH

Mary, as the rich and pretty Mrs. Fream, turns another leaf in Weyfleet's social calendar. She learns that even wealth cannot make all roads smooth nor free of temptation. Disillusioned and disgusted with life in general she visits Green Shutters, and again her path and Arnold's cross dangerously.

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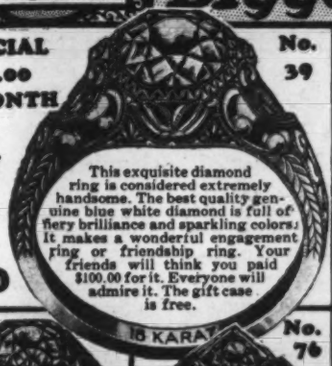
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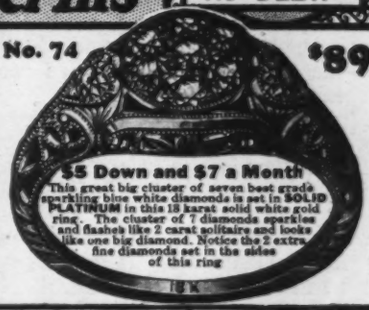
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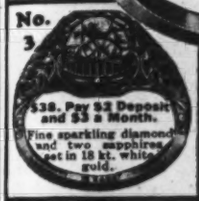

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on, I get you." Gay Charlestoned to the three piece orchestra that was doing nobly out front.

"Maybe she does," Buddy acknowledged. "But I can't do different. Do you blame me?"

"I don't know; p'raps not . . . But don't you ask me to cry over her. Gold digging mommas like that ain't in my line."

Buddy followed her to her entrance, studying the small wiry figure that pushed its way aggressively to the front of the line of ponies. Gay was a wise little guy; she could take care of herself. But—he saw Cliff Reban lounge across to speak to her—could she?

That evening the house manager's brother, who worked in a half-hearted fashion at bootlegging, slipped a package into the red roadster just before Reban and Gay came out. Buddy, just leaving the theater, paused in the entrance way.

"Wait a minute, kid," he said, catching Gay's hand as they passed him.

"Just a sec," Gay tossed over her shoulder to her companion, and followed Buddy back into the shadows of the entrance. "Make it snappy." She tipped her small red hat farther over one eye and stood waiting.

"Where are you stepping?" Buddy tried to make his tones casual but in spite of himself some of his anguish crept into his voice, giving his words a harsh sound.

Gay flared up resentfully. "What's it to you?" she asked and turned away.

"You listen to me!" Buddy jerked her about rudely. "I just seen that bum, Tom Bell, slip a sockful of hootch in that bird's car—and let me tell you that a baby like Reban can't drive a boat like his on white mule—not safe—and you can't go with him——"

"You let me be!" Gay shrugged off his hand. "You got me sore on you once before this week and now I'm sore to stay sore." She ran out and down the steps to the waiting car. Buddy stood motionless until the sound of the engine died away.

A HOLIDAY spirit pervaded the company Saturday. A gay party showed up in K. K. K.'s big car, and greeted Reban and Gay with shouts and hilarious remarks. Two of the girls got up a Charleston contest back stage that almost disrupted the afternoon show, and Reban kept cutting his scenes to run off and have a word with one of the crowd and a nip from a flask. Gay was handed about like a petted child.

The night show worked like a spasm; the whole company became infected. It seemed to Buddy he was the only sane person on the show. That is, excepting Gay. She had grown suddenly quiet; her face had a queer frozen look. "As if she was scared," Buddy said to himself. But she evidently was not scared when he saw Cliff kissing her.

He turned away, sick, and stumbled downstairs to his dressing-room. A kiss was nothing—but the way Reban's lips clung to her's, the way he held her! And they were leaving together after the show, with K.K.K. and his sweetie and those others . . .

As they stood for an instant in the wings just before the finale, Buddy was on the point of speaking to Gay. But something held him back. Perhaps it was because her hand had lain like ice in his during their last number together.

As every one piled off to the dressing-rooms he heard a girl laughing, her voice at a queer, high pitch, and saw Cliff, his face flushed with liquor, lift Gay in his arms and carry her out to the cars where the rest waited amid week-end bags and hampers. Buddy gained the stairs leading down from the stage entrance just as the party pulled out. The lights shone into the red roadster and for a brief instant Gay's face, oddly masked with make-up, was turned up to his. Their eyes met. Suddenly he knew . . . She was frightened! With an oath he jumped from the stairway; the car barely missed him as it pulled away, and he picked himself up from the roadway to see the twinkling tail-lights disappear through a haze of dust.

Turning he ran up the steps and across the stage in search of some one to touch for a loan. He had to have cash if he was to follow Gay, for taxi fare. As he gained the right wings he saw a little woman in black hesitating on the opposite side. A stage hand whipped a stack of flats about, just missing her; but she only clutched her large pocketbook in a firmer hand and threaded her way across the dust-filled stage.

Buddy, only half seeing her, was making a dive for the basement, when she rested a hand on his arm.

"Son," she said gently.

Buddy stared down upon her uncomprehendingly. "Why," he stammered, "it's—it's mom!"

The little woman stood on tiptoe and kissed him soundly on either cheek.

"My baby," she said.

"But I thought—you said—you wasn't to come till next week," he looked about him despairingly. Every minute counted if he was to save Gay.

"I got ready sooner than I expected." She turned up a beaming face to his.

Buddy suddenly threw his arms about her, resting his cheek against her soft gray hair and the close-fitting black hat.

"I'm a nice one," he said. "I don't hardly know what I was saying . . . I've been so on my ear . . ."

She looked up quickly. "Something's wrong," she said. "Tell me what it is. You know mothers can help sometimes."

"Oh, it's a long story." Buddy pushed her gently out of the dust and confusion into the tiny property room off stage. "I couldn't take the time to tell you now. But," he started up again in sudden anguish, "I got to hunt money, that's all . . . I've got to have it!"

"Wait," his mother said quietly. "If it's money maybe I could help."

He turned back. "Could you!" he cried. "I—I'd give an eye for ten dollars right now. It means, oh, it means just everything to me! Would you have that much, mom?"

"Yes," she said, "maybe I might . . . Couldn't you tell me what it's for, son?"

"To save a girl," Buddy grabbed her hands. "The sweetest kid in the world, mom! A dirty bum, a guy with coin and a big car and all, has her coaxed off. She's only a bit of a kid and he bought her like you'd buy a kid with candy. And tonight when he started out with her he picked her right up in his arms and took her out to his car and there was all that bunch. Tough, mom, hard as nails, and she's sweet and young and good . . . She's *good!* And then when it was too late and the car started I seen her face and I knew! She was scared! Scared to death and all alone with that bunch. Oh, I've got to go after her! I've got to!" Beside himself he flung out of the door, his mother at his heels.

"I'm coming too," she announced. "We'll both go after her!"

At the nearest garage they got a car, an old-fashioned, high-waisted limousine which the driver swore could hit fifty easily. After a short dicker they clambored in and the silent ride began.

Buddy sat forward, his eyes on the streak of their head-lights, his ears listening to the regular staccato cough of the ancient motor. His leg muscles tensed as they slowed down on the hills, his mind went speeding along madly. Once he wondered vaguely what in the world he was to do with his mother when he arrived at the roadhouse. She solved the problem by jumping out of the car and handing the driver the exactly counted out fee they had agreed upon for the trip. Her son flung him a tip and followed.

"Wait," Buddy said, hesitating on the steps; "wait till we get a line on things. I saw Cliff's roadster parked out there; they're here all right. Let's see if I got enough cash to tip a couple of birds inside."

"A dime is enough," his mother replied decisively, and opening the door marched in, the blast from the jazz band in the lobby fairly lifting her hat from her head.

"Here!" she placed herself directly in the path of a huge negro in a purple uniform, "can you tell us where—what's the name?" She paused and turned to Buddy.

The tall darky grinned good-humoredly and bent almost double to hear.

"What you say, lady?" he asked.

"I say," Buddy's mother shrieked valiantly above the din, "Where's the Kreller party? Kreller!" she repeated.

"K. K.?" White teeth flashed again. "Private room, second floor front."

They hurried up the stairs and along the hall. There Buddy paused.

"You stay there and catch your breath," he said, finding her a chair; "And I'll go see what I can see before we make a move." He went out a French door that opened from the hall onto the balcony.

From windows to his right he could hear voices even above the din from below stairs; a woman's laugh rang out wildly, like a saxophone gone crazy. Approaching cautiously, he peered in.

It was a long narrow room filled with a damask-covered table. The Kreller party lolled about it. K. K.'s bald head gleamed white above the purple flush of his face. Cliff Reban sat with his back to the window, the little girl next to him snuggled into his arms until only the glitter of her gown and the white of one arm was visible. Patsy, the singing waiter,

stood near the door, napkin on arm, yodeling in a powerful barytone. The blonde, Susy, was crying.

"Lit," Buddy thought, with contempt. "The whole bunch." He strained his eyes to catch a glimpse over Reban's shoulder.

Suddenly the urge that had buoyed him up and carried him along failed him. He had the youngster's sudden fear of ridicule. The girl in Reban's arm stirred and lifted a hand to ruffle his hair. Buddy turned away, tears of anger and chagrin blurring his vision. The original boob—that was him!

Suddenly very weary he walked to the end of the balcony and stood looking over the grounds. His throat ached with a lump he could not swallow. He leaned against a post, his face against his arm, lost in dreary thought. Then a sudden stir in the room brought him to himself with a start. Guiltily he turned and made for the door.

As he passed the windows again he cast a hasty glance within—and halted. The little girl next to Reban was standing now, patting her hair into place. It was vivid henna and tightly curled. Gay was not in the room! Without pausing for thought Buddy threw aside the curtains and stepped inside.

K. K. saw him first and turned warningly, but not before Buddy had hurled himself upon Cliff.

"What have you done with her!" he cried wildly. "I've got to know what you've done with her!" All the pent up emotions of the last few hours came to the surface in the single jab of Buddy's fist. The blow sent Reban staggering.

Immediately the whole room seemed to close in, and the waiter, assisted by K. K. and the other men, was about to cast Buddy out, crying and fighting, when the door opened and a little woman in black came in.

"What in the world," she began. At sight of Buddy captive she came swiftly across to his side.

"You leave that boy be," she said, prodding K. K. "Ain't you ashamed, a lot of great big things all jumping on him like that!"

"Now listen, lady——"

"You let him be!" She lifted her voice, enraged.

K.K. dropped Buddy's arm and the others moved back uneasily. Cliff, having gotten to his feet, stood feeling his jaw sheepishly.

"And where's the young girl, the one my son is after? He says she's only a child, and you—why you are my age at least!" Her glance swept K.K. and Reban contemptuously. "Old men—old enough to be her father!"

This seemed to strike Susy, the blonde, as very funny and she began to laugh riotously. Her mirth infected the others, until even Cliff was grinning painfully.

"You win," K.K. said, "you and the kid here," and he pounded the unresponsive Buddy on the back. "What did you girls do with the youngster?"

"Well," said Susy, drying her streaming eyes, "you see, she passed out on us the minute she landed here—fainted dead away—so we tucked her in bed——"

"Where?" Buddy barked savagely.

Susy blinked. "Upstairs, angel child," she said.

"Will you take us up to see her?" interposed Mrs. Terrell, quietly.

"Sure," Susy assented agreeably, and led the way from the room.

Gay, very wan and small, began to cry weakly when she caught sight of Buddy. He went across and threw himself upon his knees by the bed, taking her hands in his.

"Tell me, dearest," he said, "what's wrong? What did they do to my precious?"

"Nobody did a thing to her," Susy broke in, properly indignant.

Gay peered over Buddy's head at the little woman in black near the door. "Is that the momma," she whispered.

Buddy nodded.

"Ain't you going to give me an introduction?"

"Mom," said Buddy simply, "this is Gay."

His mother went over and stooping, kissed a white cheek. "I'm glad to know you, my dear," was all she said.

"Well," said Susy, "I must toddle or I'll be a man short. If I see a waiter anywhere I'll send him up with a bowl of soup. What that little sister needs now most is food. Food and lots of rest."

"She's right at that, kid," Buddy said as he fed Gay the steaming broth a while later. "If you could only get away somewheres. Not too far from the park," he added hastily.

"Yeh," said Gay, "and I need a maid and a chauffeur, too. There's a lot I need."

"But no kidding, if I had the cash I'd see you had a rest through this hot spell anyhow. If only——" he stopped. He had been going to say if only he had that last one hundred back.

His mother stood watching them from the foot of the bed.

"You have the money, son," she said quietly.

Buddy looked up. "Likely," he laughed shortly. "Likely."

She opened the bag and took out a small black book.

"It's yours," she said. "I saved it up for you since you began working. I knew how your father was, come easy, go easy, and I was afraid with all the money you made you'd spend it foolishly, and then there'd come a day when you wanted it mighty bad. A time like this. It doesn't take much for me to live, owning the house and all, and so I saved it for you and—" she smiled tenderly—"for your bride."

Buddy stared, wonder-struck. It was a bank book taken out in his name and the balance totaled one thousand dollars.

"Gaytie—" he threw himself on the floor beside the bed—"look! Why, with all this I could darn near buy the show!"

Somewhat later Susy, armed with a bottle of wine of doubtful vintage, presented herself at the door. Buddy's mother beckoned her in. Perched side by side on the bed, their heads together, Gay and Buddy sat and sang.

You ma-hade me what I yam tuhday,
I yope your sa-tees-fied——

"The words have changed," Buddy's mother said, looking at the two tenderly, "but it's still love's old sweet song."

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little flicker that was her substitute for a smile. "Only a very stupid woman—" she tapped the ash of her cigaret gently into a huge box of marrons—"only a stupid woman believes that many people see her from the front."

Her sophistication almost stirred me to a crush.

At any rate I began using lipstick of a very lively shade, and when Easter vacation came along I joyfully accepted her bid to visit her in Philadelphia.

Their car met us at the station.

"That's the Bellevue," Edith flicked a finger at a palace. I looked blasé.

Her mother, endeavoring futilely to tidy an upset white marcel, hovered behind the maid who let us into their Chestnut Hill home.

"As usual, no cook," she announced, her voice taking on that exasperated note peculiar to women bereft of cooks.

But I forgot the servant problem in the incident that followed. As soon as she had entered her room Edith closed the door carefully and wadded paper into the empty key-hole. "The smoke," she answered my puzzled look, "might get out to mother otherwise."

That night two "Penn men" took us to a show and on to the Ritz grill. I did not order chicken salad. Two other couples joined us, and an odd man.

"He made the All-American," Edith informed me during an interval with compacts in the dressing-room. "Like him?"

"Stunning," I breathed.

She sighed. "I'd give away the secret of how I keep my schoolgirl complexion to have dates with him."

"That ought to be easy, from the number of times he's cut in on you."

"Oh, he asks me for one or so every holiday, but——"

"But what?"

"Oh, Alice Hastings, a girl in Germantown, thinks she has him pretty well sewed up. And if she heard that *I'd* had a date——"

"Would she hear, though?" I ejaculated. "In Philadelphia?"

"Of course she'd hear, goose! And with her vicious tongue to garnish the few cocktails I've drunk—— Well, that's about all this town would need!"

And this was Philadelphia's metropolitan soul!

Some friends of ours—the Venables—were ordered to San Francisco.

"Susie, who's been maid and cook to us for years, balked at this move," Mrs. Venable said to my mother before she left.

"You needn't worry," prophesied my mother. "Within two weeks you will have found some cook who'll be able to make everything from French pastries to Virginia spoon bread."

Some months later Mrs. Venable wrote mother:

> You were right. One of our household fixtures now is Helena. Helena is a little broomstick individual with a head of hempen hair. But put her in a black uniform and a postage stamp apron and you have a parlor maid that makes these Californians homesick.
>
> One wry-mouthed wife of a very rich man here was sampling Helena's drop cakes as if she were ashamed to be caught eating, yet sampling them by the half dozen, and meanwhile eyeing Helena. Later she wanted to know where I had got her. Helena reminded her of the help back in Hartford. Other people could have these padding-footed Japs if they wanted to, but she, for one, liked God-fearing Christians. Did I think there was any chance of Helena's having a friend who'd like a situation?
>
> I gave her fresh tea and said I didn't know, but that she might try the place where Helena had come from. What agency? Oh, it wasn't exactly an agency. It was a branch of the Salvation Army that helped girls who had made a mistake.
>
> Made a mistake! Merciful Heavens, I didn't mean to say that I had taken a fallen woman into my home, did I? And trusted her with the children and the silver and—and——
>
> I pointed out, rather tartly, that I hadn't said a thief.
>
> But she scarcely heard me. She was inquiring in a sort of mumble what the world was coming to. No, she didn't care for any more of those cakes!

AN ARTIST came to visit me in Washington. Don't try to visualize a grimy, paint-smeared individual. This artist was a lovely lady, with an unbelievable satin finish to her skin and a casual way of wearing Doucet and Paquin models that left one no breath.

What could one do, then, with such an artist when she came to Washington? Came fresh from painting a portrait of a crown princess? I regretted not having the knack of wearing pearls and placing celebrities easily at candle-lit tables.

We went for dinner that night at the Chateau le Paradis. Things started well enough. One of the men in the party was the sort of man a hostess puts first on her dinner lists. He had an air. Also he had a way of saying the subtle thing to a woman that gives her a chance to scintillate. I felt smug over my party. Washington was doing me proud.

Then the late supper hour came.

"Hello," blurps!" It was the Georgetown gang. I felt suaveness turning on its heel. "How's to let us meet the lady?"

Then a beautiful dark man bowed from the waist towards our table. Carlos! This was better. One of the boys spoiled it, though, by remarking: "Carlos likes pretty ladies, and besides he's filthy with legation liquor."

A swan-throated blonde and a round-eyed child with a cunning, bunched mouth drifted by with three men in tow. "What do you know?" drawled the swan-throated one, hesitating near us.

"Nothing much," I began as usual; then corrected myself, "Oh, yes I do, too. I forgot." I made some casual introductions. "She——" I nodded towards my guest, "is visiting me over the week-end. Portrait painter." I mentioned the crown princess and other glamorous names. The girl scribbled things on a torn bit of menu card and floated away.

The lovely lady arched her brows interrogatively.

I explained. "The local society page. Her father was the House leader once. The other girl's a dip."

"A dip?"

"Diplomat—her father's a minister to this country."

Of course inevitably my visitor asked a question about Mrs. Coolidge.

"Oh, she's lovely," chimed in the youngster named Polly. "She belongs to my sorority, and once at a party——"

The lovely lady's laughter rippled like cool, silver water. We looked at her wonderingly. But all she could say for the moment was, "So this is Washington!"

The clever man helped her out. "I know," he smiled. "The last time I was down in Atlanta after an absence of a dozen years I was all prepared for the metropolis my friends' letters had led me to expect. Then," he chuckled, "then opera week came 'round. Opera week! I won't bore you with details—only no street fair on Main Street ever caused more excitement than opera week in Atlanta."

The man from Cleveland caught on. "My town too," he volunteered. "Gossip and rivalries—regular sewing circle."

"That's it," smiled my visitor. "Now I who was born of New York parents and raised there, can lose myself more easily in New York than in any other place in this country. But in these other cities . . ." She broke off and picked up her fork, only to lay it down again. "I did think, though, that Washington might be more—well, cosmopolitan. One of the world's capitals, you know. Instead, I find that you call each other by your first names, that a party leader is only somebody's father, and that the President's wife is just one of your sorority sisters."

"Provincial, eh?" suggested the clever man.

"No. Adorable, rather. There's something so warm and human about it all, so naive and spontaneous."

I cupped my chin in my hands and stared at the dancers, thinking. I thought of Boston and Chicago and Philadelphia. I thought of a dozen other cities. Cities were they? Or just bigger little towns? I thought of that modern Pied Piper piping to the young to come away. Luring them with a mad, high, sweet tune down strange roads, away from warm safe dwellings, to that City of Desire, where Freedom dances and the spires of castles in Spain meet the stars.

But was not Freedom a wraith that mocked one after new conventions had fastened on their manacles? And those spires of Spanish castles, were they not after all merely the towers of court-house and town hall and post office? In broad daylight could we, the adventurous young, ever face the portals and say,

> "Let us go no further, lord;
> Here is a city of enchanters, built
> By fairy kings."

"I'm not so sure," I finally decided aloud, "that even New York is different. Maybe it is. But there's a soda clerk at Hick's on Fifth Avenue who always puts extra whipped cream on my sundaes for nothing."

They laughed. I pursed my mouth about the tip of my straw and drew in a long cool drink of what the Chateau le Paradis calls *coupe aux fruits*, but which any circus knows is pink lemonade.

all right. But how do you get that way?"

"This is my business, ain't it?"

"It's my business, too, now."

"You don't need the money, Rosalind."

"Oh, I don't, don't I? How do you know so much? Say, I'm not planning to spend my young life in this joint, Jack. I'm planning something different when—when he comes home."

Jack Knife's voice thickened slightly. "Whatcher plannin'?"

Her eyes didn't meet his for a second. Then she said quickly, "Well, I'll tell you. Why not? I think maybe he'd have a better chance somewheres else, where he isn't known, where he wouldn't be mixed up with gorillas——"

"Guys like me?" he interjected.

"Yeh, like you, Jack, if you got to have it that way. Only you can stand it an' he can't. You're strong and he—well, he ain't so strong. And so when he comes home I want to have a little money ready for moving somewheres else."

"He won't be happy nowheres else but here, girlie. That's old stuff you're thinkin' of. That salvation stuff don't work around here some way."

"We could try it."

"He won't try it."

"We'll see if he won't when—when he comes home. Ain't he learned anything up there?"

"He ain't learned nothin' he didn't know before an' a whole lot worse. Nobody ever does an' I've seen lots of 'em, Rosalind."

"Gee, you're an encouraging sort of guy, you are! You're enough to give a feller the heebie jeebies."

"It ain't that, girlie. I don't want you to get another sock in the slats. You've had enough of 'em, Rosie."

"Maybe he'll do it for me, Jack—for me an' for Bobby."

"Well, maybe he will," Jack Knife finally agreed. "But I'll tell you one thing, Rosie, and that is he won't like it if he knows you been foolin' around with the dudes that come in here."

"I ain't fooling around. You know that, Jack. I give 'em as good as they give me. You know that. I just get in the way when they're rotten with booze and throwing money around like it was paper."

"I know it sure. But maybe he won't know it. He ain't been here to see it like I been."

"Well, you'll tell him, won't you?"

"I'll tell him you're the squarest kid I ever seen," Jack Knife said. "I'll tell him that good an' plenty."

He swung away from her abruptly.

SOMETIMES in the dawn, when the Happiness Club had closed, when the piano was covered and the violin laid away, when the girls and the men had gone—then, when the pitiless gray light of morning came creeping in upon them, Jack drove Rosalind to the Pennsylvania Station where she took the first morning train to Bayside.

Once away from the Happiness Club the morning light didn't seem so pitiless. The air was fresh, invigorating. It blew away the atmosphere and the memory of the Happiness Club as it blew away the pall of smoke and the fumes of raw whiskey from the Club when its rear door, at dawn, was flung wide. And it was exciting to see the sun come over the housetops—the sun that so strangely arose anew each day to make a new world in which anything seemed possible.

Reluctant winter dawns; smoky spring dawns that quickly became rapturous; summer mornings when full daylight burst upon them glaringly when they emerged from the shuttered darkness of the Club; autumnal dawns in which Rosalind shivered with a catch of her breath.

"No, don't drive me down, Jack."

"Aw, why not?"

"The Seventh Avenue car's all right. It gets me there quick as anything."

"I like to drive you down, Rosalind—Rosie."

"It—it's happening too often—Jack."

"Aw, don't say that. I ain't drove you down in a week."

"They'll get to talkin' at the Club."

"A fat lot they are to talk! What right've they got to talk about you an' me, Rosie?"

"No right, Jack, but he'll be coming home soon now. I don't want him to hear any talk."

"Onct I told you that."

"I don't mind talk about the others. I don't want no talk about you an' me, Jack."

Silence. A silence Jack Knife broke to say cheerfully, "An' how's the kid, Rosalind?" He knew he could always get her talking on that subject.

"Oh, the kid's fine! Grand! He's the healthiest l'il feller you ever saw. The count. 's been wonderful for him. The city's no place for a kid, is it?"

"No, that's what I was always tellin' her about our kid. Les stop an' get a cup of coffee, Rosie, an' some eggs or somethin'."

"No, not this morning, Jack."

"Aw, why not?"

"I just got time to get my train, Jack." Which wasn't true. And he knew it wasn't true. And she knew he knew it.

"I'd like to see that l'il feller of yours some time."

Rosalind looked uncomfortable. "Yeh, I'd like for you to see him some time."

"Maybe you could bring him in some afternoon an' we could take him to the Aquarium. I used to take my kid to the Aquarium when he was about three. Gee, he thought it was swell!"

"Yeh, but what would I do with him afterwards? I couldn't take him to the Club."

"No, you couldn't do that. But you could take him home again, Rosie. You could take the night off. Why don't you take a night off onct in a while anyways, Rosie?"

"What for? Soon I'll be taking every night off when—when he gets home."

He smiled down upon her when finally she entered a taxi; sat crushed away from him. "An' when you start the salvation stuff in some other burg?"

"Yeh, when I start that," she said stoutly.

They drove down the incline into the

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Long Island section of the Pennsylvania Station.

"Good-night, Jack."

"Good-night, Rosalind—Rosie."

"It's funny to be saying good night when by rights you ought to be saying good morning, ain't it?"

"Gee, there's nothing I'd like better than to be sayin' good morning to you each an' every morning, Rosie."

She flushed. "Jack, I told you not to say things like that."

"I didn't mean to say it," he said abjectly. "It jus' sort of slipped out."

She gave him her hand a little shyly, jumped from the taxicab and left him.

Many dawns. Many dawns when the world seemed born anew and anything seemed possible . . .

THE Happiness Club was fortunate. Jack Knife knew from long experience how to stand in with the authorities. But the process of standing in was involved. The chain that led to protection was lengthy and complex. Occasionally a link in the chain was faulty. Then there was trouble. The Happiness Club had escaped trouble for a long time but one night—or, rather, one morning—trouble arrived.

It was at two or three in the morning. The violinist and the pianist were a little drunk and the music was delirious. Two or three couples were dancing. At the small tables the men and girls were crowded close together, engaged in noisy chit-chat and repartee.

Then, like an alarm, there was a pounding of clubs on the inner door, on the shuttered windows.

The Happiness Club occupied the basement of what had been a residence in its younger and more innocent days. One entered the Happiness Club through the basement entrance, through an outer door of iron and an inner wooden door; but inside, leading upstairs, was another door insecurely fastened.

When the pounding of clubs started on the iron door without, Jack Knife and his waiters also started into quick and effective action. It was like a well organized fire drill. Glasses were snatched from tables. In the kitchen bottles were emptied down the sink and there was a great brittle clamor of glass being smashed.

Then Jack Knife ran to the front door and demanded, "Who's there?"

But he was too late. The door that led upstairs burst open with a crash and the dicks tumbled in upon them. They spread angrily and buzzingly like grotesque, gigantic bees. They blundered, buzzing, from table to table and into the kitchen.

Meanwhile the guests shrank back frightened, or sat undismayed and amused according to their natures. Some even cocked their heads defiantly at the officers, and muttered profane and uncomplimentary remarks about them.

The girls at the first crash had jumped from the tables, and were clustered together in one corner of the room.

One raider, swooping beneath a table, brought forth in triumph a glass half filled with whiskey which some misguided guest had hidden there.

To Jack Knife all of this was an old story. He stood, his arms folded, awaiting developments.

One of the bulls swaggered up to him. "You're the proprietor here, ain't you?"

"Sure."

"Well, we want you—" he turned to the others—"an' the rest of you get out, see? You ought to feel lucky we're letting you off this easy."

There was a general scramble for hats and coats and the exit.

But to Rosalind it wasn't an old story. To her, it was some new and horrible sort of nightmare. She crouched back against the piano, alone and afraid. And when the policeman told Jack he wanted him she stifled a cry and then threw herself across the room and flung her arms around him.

"Jack, what'll they do to you?"

He pulled her arms from him and held her away. "Lissen, Rosalind," he whispered intensely, "what's the matter? Are you crazy?"

"What'll they do to you, Jack?"

"Nothin'! Nothin', kid. It's awright."

"Does it mean—like Wallie?"

"No, no! Now don't be upsettin' yourself. I tell you it's awright."

"I couldn't stand it if they took you, Jack, like—like Wallie."

He didn't speak for a minute. He gazed at her with an expression new to his eyes—a smoldering and awakened expression. His eyes said he wanted to crush her to him while his hands held her away from him.

"I'm tellin' you not to worry, Rosie. It's awright. The worst it means is I'll be locked up for the night. Thas all."

"Can I go with you?"

"No, no!" he said quickly, angry now or pretending anger. "You go home—thas all—you go home as quick as you can."

"You're not kidding me?"

"No! I'm tellin' you I ain't. What's the idea? You come tomorrow same as usual an' everything'll be the same as usual. Get away from me, Rosie. Don't you see all them bulls lookin' at you, grinnin' at you——"

"But, Jack——"

"It's awright, I'm tellin' you. Look at what they're doing to your coat room. Makin' chop suey of it. Where's your nerve anyways?"

She moved away from him reluctantly. His eyes followed her all across the room.

ROSALIND arrived earlier than usual the next night at the Happiness Club. But Jack Knife wasn't there. When the man who attended to the drinks came in, she asked him if he knew anything.

It seemed that he knew a great deal. He had heard from Jack. Everything was all right. The raid had been a mistake. Jack would be in later. He had to see a man or two to make sure there would be no more immediate mistakes. New people had come into power. New chains had to be forged.

Rosalind retired into the coat room which was nothing more than a hall closet repainted, equipped with an electric light and with hooks instead of shelves. Yet it was large enough to accommodate one chair. Rosalind settled herself on the chair and waited with the unquestioning patience with which some women await the crises in their lives—birth or death, happiness or disaster.

The musicians arrived, the girls arrived, a spattering of early guests arrived; there was much chatter about the happenings of the night before; of how various people had felt and what they had thought, and of how they had conducted themselves with great spirit and self-confidence. Within the cloister of her coat room, Rosalind imagined that many a curious and railing glance was thrust at her. She didn't emerge even to sell cigarets.

It was after one when Jack Knife came in. The Happiness Club was getting into its swing by then.

Jack Knife passed her by with a nod. "Hello, Rosalind," he said—but there was a look in his eyes that was like a kiss. He went on into the kitchen, however, to consult with the man who attended to the booze. He wandered back into the front room, greeting his guests, sitting down at tables with two or three for a casual word.

It was half an hour, three quarters of an hour, before he came back to Rosalind. She had been conscious of every second that had passed since his entrance. She knew that he would come back to her. She suffered waiting for him.

He leaned his arms on the partition that separated the coat room from the passage.

"Rosalind, we got to have a talk."

"Yes." Her voice came with difficulty.

"Come on out an' we'll sit at that corner table. Ethel can look after the coats."

"No."

"Why not?"

"They'll think I'm your girl."

"Well, ain't you my girl, Rosalind? Now?"

"No, no, Jack!"

"Come on out an' we'll talk it over. We got to talk it over anyways."

"All right. I'll be there in a minute."

He went to the corner table and sat down. When she joined him he rose from his chair as if she were a lady and he a gentleman.

He was triumphant and tender. He laid his hand on hers, warm, vibrant, strong. "You are my girl, Rosie. Now! After last night."

She pulled her hand away. She was frightened of him and of herself. Her heart hurt her with its pounding. "No, no, Jack! Last night didn't mean anything."

"Sure it did. It meant a lot. It meant a lot to me, Rosie."

"It only meant I was so scared I didn't know what I was doing."

His voice dropped. "I know what you was doin'. Aw, Rosie! I know now. You can't kid me."

"We—we've got to be decent, Jack."

"It ain't being anything but decent when it's like this between you an' I. I didn't know for a long time what was the matter wit' me, Rosie, but I know now. I feel like a sixteen-year-old kid that's got it bad for the first time. Honest I do! I feel like new blood was poured into me."

"No, Jack! No!"

"What are we going to do about it, Rosie? What are we going to do, sweetheart?"

"We're not going to do anything. Nothing at all."

"We got to, Rosie. This don't happen often. It's never happened to me before. It's like something I never knew was before. It's like a long drink when you been t'irsty all your life."

She couldn't resist asking, "Didn't you feel this way—not even with her?"

"Never wit' her even. Not this way. And what about him?"

"Never like this, Jack. It was like before I didn't know anything and was crazy for anybody, and now it's like I know everything and——"

"Go on, Rosie—my Rosie!"

"No, I can't!"

"Well, don't let's talk about him."

"We got to talk about him. We got to think about him."

"He ain't worth it, kid. You said it onct. He ain't strong, an' he ain't worth it because he ain't strong."

"That's why I got to think of him, because he ain't strong."

"You're my girl now," he repeated fiercely.

"No, Jack! No! Not that way."

They were silent.

They could not use the word love. To them it was a soft word, sentimental, outlawed. But they knew now that this was love that had come to them. Bewildering, terrifying, urgent—the ultimate enchantment! Love in the Happiness Club against a whirling background of cheap vice. Love in Forty-eighth Street!

The music whimpered, sobbed; round and round the floor the dancers revolved, clasped closely in each other's arms. But these two could not touch each other; dared not touch each other. They were silent, and their silence was like their love in that place, an alien and unwelcome guest.

Presently Rosalind turned to Jack quivering. "Look here, Jack! We don't know how this happened or why it's happened. But we do know this: you like me because I'm square an' I like you because you're square. An' if we don't go on being square, what's left us? Nothing! That's how it is, Jack. Honest, that's how it is!"

"Yeh, but last night——"

"I wasn't myself last night."

"You was yourself. For the first time you let me see yourself. Always before you was fightin' to keep me from seein' an' from knowin'."

"And so was you, Jack."

"Yeh, but I didn't know about you."

"We got to go on fighting, Jack."

"I can't hardly believe it, I can't, that you're turnin' me down. Not now!"

"I'm only turnin' you down because we got to be square."

"I never knew before it hurt to be square."

"Aw, it does hurt. It does! But we got to do it."

"It'll hurt more an' more, now that we know."

"We got to do it, Jack. He'll be coming home soon."

"Don't let's talk about him."

"We got to talk about him. We got to think about him. An' he was always a good pal of yours, you know that, Jack."

"Yeh, thas right!" he said.

And, suddenly, there in the sight of everybody, he dropped his head on the table. "Aw, *goddam it!*" he said.

Rosalind knew she had won.

AT FIRST Rosalind decided that she must leave the Happiness Club. But Jack Knife persuaded her not to. "It's awright, Rosie," he said, "it's settled now. I'll not be plaguin' you. An' you need the money for this here salvation stuff you're plannin'. Where else can you make the money you make here?"

It was true. She wanted the money. She wanted desperately to have enough so that she and Wallie and Bobby could be certain of getting to some other environment. She was pinning all her hopes to that. For now it meant her own salvation as well as Wallie's.

So she stayed in the Happiness Club and Jack Knife kept his promise. He didn't plague her. Only a "Hello, Rosie, how's everything?" when she came in at night, and a "Good-night, Rosie," when she left in the morning.

They were forced to leave each other completely alone. It was the only way. For always it was as if there was something angry and insistent within her, trying to whisper to something within him. It was only within themselves that they lived.

No more conversations, bantering and gay; no more confessions; no more drives to the station in the dawn when the world seemed made anew and anything seemed possible.

Anything wasn't possible. She knew it now.

And so autumn chilled into winter . . .

Then one night Wallie came home. That is, he came to the Happiness Club, a worn young man, pallid from his confinement, trembling with the frail anger of hoarded injustices.

There was nothing dramatic about their meeting, Wallie's and Rosalind's. Jack Knife let him into the club through the iron door and then went to summon Rosalind.

"He's here," Jack said.

She knew at once whom he meant. Her fingers plucked at her lower lip. "Wallie?" she repeated.

"Yeh."

She finished arranging the hats and coats and then went to Wallie. She kissed him.

"Hello, Wallie!"

"'Lo! So this is where you are, is it?"

"Sure. I wrote you."

"This is a hell of a place for a feller to come home to, this is!"

"I had to do it, Wallie."

They sat down at a table together.

"Seems to me you could of done somethin' better than this, you an' your talk of what's right an' what's wrong."

"Say, lissen, Wallie! There's nothing wrong in what I done."

"Yeh, I know what the girls in here are like. Don't talk to me like I was born yesterday."

"Lissen, Wallie! I wanted to make all I could——"

"Sure! But how did you make it?"

This was very different from the homecoming Rosalind had counted upon. She

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didn't know this white-faced, ill-tempered little man confronting her. "Look here, young feller!" she said, "I want you to talk decent and think decent. I'm trying to tell you why I wanted all the money I could get together. You shut up and listen to me! I wanted it so we could have a real home somewheres——"

"Aw, t'ell wit' that!"

"No, wait. Let's have a drink. I want to blow tonight. I want to celebrate—" She caught herself in a sob. "I got a swell plan for us, Wallie. For you an' me an' Bobby."

"How's the kid?"

"Fine! Grand! You'll be proud when you see him."

"Proud! He'll be proud of his old man, he will!"

"He don't know, Wallie. He'll never know. Why should he?"

"Well, where's that drink you was shoutin' about?"

The waiter brought drinks.

Rosalind drew her chair closer to her husband's. She ran her hand down his arm and let her fingers come to rest, interlocked with his. "Now lissen to me, Wallie! Now you got to lissen! I got enough money saved so we can go away somewheres——"

"Aw, t'ell wit' that!"

"No, don't say that! Don't, Wallie! You don't know what you're saying. We got to do it—you an' me an' Bobby."

"Nothin' doing!"

"No, wait. I want to tell you. I got to tell you."

"Aw, can't you let up? A guy don't want to hear all this tripe on his first night home. Hey, waiter! Bring us another shot."

"We can go somewheres where nobody'll know anything about us."

"Ashamed of me, are you? Oh, I knew you would be."

"No, I ain't——"

"Aw, sure you are. Well, let me tell you somethin', my fine lady. I was thinkin' things over up there—up the river. An' what I was thinkin' was I'd done a lot better an' had a lot better pickings if I wasn't tied to you an' your brat these three, four years. How do you like that, hey? How does that strike you, an' you so high an' mighty."

"Don't talk like that, Wallie. Not your first night home."

"Yeh, this is a hell of a first night home, ain't it? This is a hell of a place to come home to, this is, an' it's a hell of a place for a guy to find his girl."

She shook his arm. "You cut that out, see! You talk decent and you think decent. Gawd, if you only knew the truth——"

"Aw, I guess I ain't no fool. I know the kinda girls they have in this place, see? You want to get me away somewheres so I won't *learn* the trut'——" He half rose, startled at his own words. "Oh, so that's the trut', is it?" he finished slowly, a glint of cunning in his eyes.

"Wallie, you——"

"An' you think I'm going to stick wit' you an' your brat, do you? Well, I ain't, see? I'm gettin' out. I was just waiting for the chanst!"

She rose with him, clinging to him. "Wallie, don't! Don't say it, Wallie!"

Suddenly he freed his hand from her clutch and sent it stinging across her face. Blood welled from her lip. She mopped it with her handkerchief.

Instantly Jack Knife was beside her, his fists clenched. Rosalie held him off. "No, no, Jack! He don't know what he's doing."

But Wallie's anger was not spent. "I know what I'm doin' awright," he snarled. "So this is your boy friend, is it—this guy who used to call hisself a buddy of mine. Well, I'm goin' now. And I'm mighty glad to get rid of you, you——"

He blundered to the door. Some one opened it for him and he went out. Jack Knife and Rosalind stood gazing at each other.

"Well, he's gone," Jack said at last, somberly.

"Yeh," she said apathetically.

He started to speak, stopped, then cleared his throat and asked in a thick voice, "Can—can I drive you down to the station this morning, Rosie?"

"Yes, sure," she said steadily. "Any morning an' every morning, Jack."

A. W. O. L.—continued from page 35

off. Then he stopped with a tricky look in his eyes and said: "Ah, you 'ave per-'aps see' one—senorita ladee een thees street?"

We was away over toward the docks from town. No lady would be caught dead down that alley. Bud said we hadn't seen her.

"She wanted?" he asked—out of politeness, I suppose.

"Ah-h, *si!*" said the *sereno*. "Wot you call crazee! She, *también,* 'ave beat it from ze 'ouse'old of ze gr-r-ran' Senator-r Laranaga. *Muy* crazee!"

A nut! Well, we hadn't seen a soul in an hour, and Bud said so.

"*Entonces,* I proceed," said the spig. "Eef you see you weel wheestle me, no? So! *Mil gracias, mi sargento!*" And eased off along a side street.

After about an hour's stroll Bud and I come along by that wall again. It was darker than ever and getting cool, and I think we was kind of heading for the motor-sailer, ready to call it off. Then, suddenly, we hopped into an offset in the adobe wall and peered down that side street where the *teniente* had gone.

Footsteps were coming, and whoever was making them had shoes on and was stepping off a hundred and twenty to the minute, marine fashion. In a second this bird was right on top of us. He was dressed in dirty white dungarees like a spig, only he had no *serape* and he was bare-headed. I just about had him pegged for a beach-comber when he spun around. It was Jimmy.

I remember seeing Bud reach out a hand to shake, and I think I said: "H'lo!" Jimmy gasped, stood by to go about, then streaked it back toward the side street.

"Halt!" Bud sung out, and snatched at his holster.

Jimmy hadn't made more than six jumps before Bud had him covered.

"Halt, I tell ya! *Halt!*"

Believe you me, Bud put a lot of stuff into that last "Halt." It sounded final, and it got over.

I don't know if he would have shot Jimmy; I guess Bud don't know that himself. Anyhow, Jimmy halted. Bud rapped out his subsequent commands and Jimmy obeyed them same as if we was any old marines and he was any old prisoner.

"U-up—*oars!* Backward—*march!* Way enough, stand fast! All right, Dummy, frisk him!"

JIMMY stopped with his back toward us and I come to life and made sure he had no hardware. Bud started to stick his gat back in the holster just as Jimmy dropped his hands and turned on us, trying to talk. Bud jabbed him hard amidships with the automatic.

"Stand by, you fathead!" he gritted. "Do you want me to croak ya?"

He waved his gun in the direction of the ship. Jimmy begun to argue.

"Bud," he said, "will you listen to me for a coupla minutes?"

"Aw-w-w, what's the use?" Bud come back. "The skipper'll listen to ya when we get aboard. We're in a hurry now."

"Wait," Jimmy insisted. "I want you guys to know, Bud——"

Bud cut in, pretty rough:

"Aw-w! I know you shoved off, an' we got orders to bring ya back in arrest. Where's ya clothes?"

"A li'l spig has 'em in his skiff, down under the first pier this side of the breakwater."

You see, if he went back aboard in uniform the worst they could try him for would be A.W.O.L. But them dungarees he was in cinched a conviction for desertion. Bud looked him over kind of sour.

"You had your getaway all framed, huh?" he asked.

"Yep," admitted Jimmy. "Banana boat for Havana at daylight; Ward Line from there to N'York. We'd 'a' been gone in ten minutes."

"We!" Bud flashed. "Whaddaya mean we?"

"We-ell, Bud," Jimmy hesitated, "it's a—a lady!"

Bud gasped. So did I. Jimmy Blake was no cream puff.

"What?" Bud snorted. "For the luvva Pete! A squaw!"

"Belay that, you!" Jimmy raved. "This is a *lady*—white—from the States!"

"Ye-ah!" Bud sneered. "What's the lady doin' down here? Makin' a damn good marine into a scummy deserter!"

"Hol' on!" Jimmy begged. "I'm no deserter. I'm goin' to report in at League Island soon's I get her home!"

"Listen!" Bud ordered. "You're goin'

to the brig, aboard ship, that's where you're goin'! Them clothes make a deserter outa ya. You look like a quart o' milk!"

"Bud," Jimmy insisted, trying to cool off, "we've been pals, ain't we? If you knew——"

Bud interrupted him, looking solemn and talking straight from the shoulder.

"Say, all I know is how to do my duty. *Semper fidelis,* is the word! Nope, you'll halfta stand the gaff!"

"Aw, desertion's no felony, y' know," Jimmy argued. "This ain't war time or anything!"

"Listen! John R. Marine Corps says desertion is a crime," said Bud wearily. "Come on, le's go!"

He waved towards the water-front with his gat.

"Bud," Jimmy growled, excited, "if you knew the dope you wouldn't turn me in! I'm helpin' a lady outa bad trouble, an' until the job is finished—I'm *damned* if——"

He snatched at Bud's automatic like a streak. The scrap that followed was no puny struggle, believe you me. Bud was our crack middleweight, and I'm about as lifty with my dukes as any old knuckle-duster aboard. Jimmy was a football man, and had once smacked the fleet champion to sleep with one straight arm jab to the chin. For a minute it looked like he was going to make the grade with us. I dove at his feet, and got kicked square in the port lamp. Bud come out nursing a sprained jaw and various bruises.

ANYHOW, when it was all over, we had one blue steel shackle on Jimmy's right wrist and the other on Bud's left. Jimmy was still foaming at the mouth; but when Bud come about and headed for the pier he tugged back on the bracelet. His voice was desperate as he said:

"Damitall, Bud, how about a li'l o' this *semper fidelis* to a pal—huh?"

Bud stopped and stared at the ground for a second.

"Aw-w, razzberry!" he said; then kind of impatient, "Well, go ahead an' spill ya story."

Jimmy heaved a long breath and began:

"When I'd left Pablo with his squaw—ya 'member the li'l cargador that got cut up when we come ashore Tuesday night—I started up town lookin' for you. I was just a block from the plaza on a side street, in front of a big two story stone house, with a garden on top an' windows all barred up——"

Bud broke in: "Yeah! Ol' Senator Laranaga's palace." Then he turned to me and said in an excited whisper: "For the luvva sixbits! Could she be the *nut!*"

Jimmy shot right ahead with his alibi: "Yeah, Laranaga! Right in front of his place a flower pot whizzed by my nose an' busted on the bricks in front o' me. I looked up quick, just in time to see a face leanin' out o' the garden—a white woman, I tell ya—an' a hand pointed down to the sidewalk. Then I picked up this chit."

Jimmy fumbled in his shirt pocket and took out a scrap of paper. It wasn't light enough to read by, so I scratched a match and Bud mumbled out the words:

Help me. I am an American girl, prisoner in this awful place. Help me now. Tonight will be too late.

Bud sneered.

"An' you fell for a plant like that!"

"Plant, nuthin'," Jimmy come back. "Y' see how shaky that writin' is? Scared to death! She comes from the States I tell ya. From Philadelphia!"

"Ah, get out. Philly!" Bud said. "What 'd ya do?"

"Say, I got busy!" went on Jimmy. "I double-timed over to my li'l spig's an' got a coupla fathoms o' line an' a big knife. In about steen minutes I had the girl all right, an' we was duckin' through the alleys back to Pablo an' Maria. We got kinda skint up shinnyin' down the stucco wall. But she was game, you bet!"

"She know the town?" asked Bud.

"She didn't know nuthin', on'y the trouble she was in," Jimmy declared. "Three mozos from Laranaga's trailed us, but we lost 'em. Must 'a' got our bearin's, though, 'cause a coupla *serenos* held down the corner across from Pablo's, day an' night. My li'l grease-spot an' his squaw was scared to breathe. Maria took care o' the lady, but we couldn't poke a nose outdoors till Pablo hustled some spig clothes for us."

"How 'd ya lady friend get up on the roof?" Bud probed.

"Listen, you! That lady's class all the way," Jimmy come back. "She was kidnapped. Abducted one evening when a crowd of swell tourists had come off a steamer to see Altobasco."

"Kidnapped! The hell she was! Tell me the rest, an' tell it fast!"

"Well, I'm tellin' ya, ya poor sap! I hid her till I had fixed up this getaway. Ya see——"

"Aw, where's the girl?" Bud broke in, all excited. "What does she look like? Where is she now?"

"She'll likely be along, lookin' for me on the road to the pier," Jimmy admitted. "That's why I been stallin' for time this way."

"Well, why don't she come?" Bud demanded. "Why 'nt she come?"

"Aw, what's it to you, anyhow?" Jimmy growled. "She'll come, all right."

"Say," Bud wanted to know, "why 'nt ya come back to the ship when ya got her out?"

"What, an' leave her! In a dump like this, alone?" demanded Jimmy. "Not a chance! Them two li'l spigs coulda got in good by turnin' her up. This ape Laranaga's all same God to them. Why, every other spig in town is lookin' for her!"

THEN Bud sprung a mine that rocked us to the keel.

"Keep this under ya hats!" he ordered. "If this bimbo is the one, the Behemoth come clean over here from Guantanamo after her, at the request o' the State Department. Smilin' Joe told me confidential to look out for a kidnapped American girl. She's related to some one with an awful lot of pull. That damn spig's talk about her bein' a nut threw me all off. The Ol' Man must 'a' given it up, 'cause we sail with the tide in the mornin'."

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"Sure it's her," Jimmy raved. "All the class in the world. Laranaga took a shine to her, the ol' skunk. He keeps a whole harem up in that roof garden!"

"He's the works, here," Bud said. "Owns half o' Malprima!"

"Yeah," agreed Jimmy. "Li'l Pablo's havin' heart failure, right now, 'cause I don't get back to the skiff. Off'll go his head, an' Maria's too, if the other spigs get wise they helped us. I shoulda gone back to the Bee, I guess, but I figured Smilin' Joe would think I was fulla hootch."

"Say!" Bud raved, "if this is the jane the State Department is after, why, Jimmy, you won't rate the brig! An' we'll be solid with the navy for life, besides! What's her name?"

"She wouldn't tell me, Bud," Jimmy admitted. "Scared we wouldn't get away. But her people must be big medicine, all right. She's a gamester, b'leeve me!"

"Philly, huh?" Bud marveled. "So that's why you was goin' to turn in at League Island!"

"Well," Jimmy explained, "I couldn't turn her loose, could I? How 'd I know the Bee was lookin' for her? I figured when I got her back to the States I could report in anywhere."

"How'd they stage the abduction?" asked Bud.

"Why, Laranaga got her snatched off the first moment she was separated from her party. You know how it is. A whole gang of people had gone ashore from the ship. They began to hit the high places pretty heavy, I guess—got split up. That sly dog of a spig senator even had one of his men deliver a message to somebody that this girl hadn't felt well and had gone back early. Well, nobody thought of anything wrong. They must've thought she was keeping close to her cabin. Anyway she wasn't spotted as missing until twenty-four hours out. And it took another day to make 'em believe that she hadn't fallen overboard but was left behind in Altobasco."

We were still chewing the rag when we sighted a little spig coming down the other side of the street. At least, this girl looked like a spig, but when Jimmy give a low whistle she come straight across to where we was ganged up by the adobe wall.

When she was close Jimmy tried to reach out to her and his bracelet jingled. The girl got next to what was up, and gave way a step. The big *serape* she was rolled in slipped from her shoulders.

ONE look at her and the war was over. Swee-eet momma! A sombrero partly covered her face; but say, she didn't need no face. Why, you couldn't have hid her class under a diving suit. When Jimmy said she was a lady, he knew something. I'll say the Marine Corps was her'n from the start! Bud didn't leave her in suspense more than a second.

"Take it easy, miss!" he advised. "We'll be o. k. when we get aboard the ship."

Jimmy broke in cheerily.

"It's all right, lady! They're looking for you. The sarge is just doin' his duty, that's all. He's my friend, Gunnery Sergeant Gridley."

The girl nodded at Bud and he acknowledged the knock-down, pop-eyed. Just then Jimmy remembered me. I got red in the face and said: "Pleas' t' meet cha!"

Bud started talking fast to cover our excitement.

"Jimmy's in arrest," he said, "but it's only temporary. We'll go aboard the ship now, whenever you're ready."

She sounded kind of shaky as she asked:

"Oh! Am I to go—on the ship? Your ship?"

She didn't seem to think much of going aboard the Bee. I couldn't blame her. Four thousand eyes would be on her from the second she stepped over the side. God pity the poor sailors on a night like this!

Just then I happened to glance off up the street, and turned cold all over. Here come a whole mob of spigs. They wasn't over a hundred yards away, and coming fast.

"Turn out the guard!" I yelled. "The spig army!"

BUD spun around, took one look, and fished in his pocket for the key to the shackles.

"Aw, le's mop up on 'em!" Jimmy cried as soon as he was free.

"Nix, Jimmy!" ordered Bud, snatching up the *serape* and trailing it across the girl's arm with one swipe. "You get this lady away from here!"

He headed them towards the waterfront.

"Under that pier an' get into your uniform!" he commanded. "Then put for the shore boat. We'll meet you there. Beat it!"

As they gathered headway, he called after them:

"If we don't come in fifteen minutes, shove off! Tell Smilin' Joe Regan!"

The spigs was right on top of us. Having no time for plans, Bud sung out to me: "Take cover!"

A sign-board bearing something about *Aviso* stood out a foot from the adobe wall, and I ducked in behind it. Bud was out in the middle of the street, waving his gat at the spigs.

"Halt!" he roared; and they done it.

There was only about a dozen of them, but they was well heeled and mighty impatient. That little *teniente* of police was the leader. He had a gat, along with three other *serenos* in the gang. The rest of them, probably old Laranaga's mozos or friends, carried knives; and a wickeder assortment of cutlery I never seen.

"Ah, *mi Sargento!*" the *teniente* sneered, stepping in front of his mob, "your friends leaving zair-r—'oo are zey?"

Bud spoke just loud enough for all hands to hear:

"Who the hell wants to know—ya li'l two per cent!"

Oh, baby, that was pretty! The spig turned white and coached his gang for the rush. With a string of choice Spanish cuss words, he hissed:

"You ar-r-re dead man, Meestair-r-r Sarszhent! One s-side, quee-eek!"

I heard the roar of Bud's automatic, and sparks begun to skip along the pavement at their feet.

"Out o' my sight, greaseballs!" he yelled. "Pronto!"

They scuttled to the doorways on both sides of the street. When their guns started popping off Bud looked around for cover, and there was none. He turned to run. Right there I opened up from the flank, but I was a split second too late. That little cop's loaded stick caught Bud a clip on the bean. He crashed to the pavement and lay still.

I drew their fire from behind my sign-board. I didn't aim to hit them. I thought they would flivver in a minute and run out on us. But the sight of Bud lying huddled in the street gave them new life, I guess, because splinters begun flying right close to my head.

Two of them made a dash down the opposite sidewalk and got into a doorway below Bud. I couldn't let them get away with that! I sprung clear of my glory-hole and started for Bud, firing as I ran.

Some spiggoty cockroach chose that moment to fling a cheese-knife that buzzed across and stuck fast in my arm. Then, just as I reached Bud's side, I found my first magazine empty. I didn't take time to pull out the knife until after I had reloaded, but it didn't spoil my aim. My gat barked twice, and them two spigs that made the dash wobbled and fell. I felt something stir at my knee. Bud sat up, sweating and pretty white, and begun firing fast.

That settled it! They seen we was shooting for keeps. One tremolo screech and the enemy departed at full speed in all directions but ours.

It was broad daylight then and near sailing time. Bud put an arm around me and we headed for the boat. On the pier we found Jimmy and the girl. The two gobs from the motor-sailer was all question marks, having heard our firing.

I had lost a lot of blood and was hurting pretty bad. When the lady turned her big blue lamps on me she shuddered. I must have looked awful, with the black eye and all.

Then suddenly she turned to Jimmy and started to cry. He pulled her close to his brass buttons, patting her on the shoulder and talking pretty. Bud grinned.

"Don't ya cry, lady," Jimmy crooned, throwing Bud a dirty look. "Why, ya'll be in ya mama's arms now in less 'n a week!"

THE gobs' eyes stuck out on stems, but we didn't pay any attention to them. Jimmy cast off, and the girl with a smile breaking through the tears reached out for his hand and shook it.

"You're great," she said softly; "you and your two friends."

"The marines," Bud smirked, for the navy's benefit, "is all like that!"

Sweet essence of bilge-water! The look on the faces of them gobs was too much for my sore arm. I felt myself slipping, and passed out of the picture.

The next I knew I was in the sick bay aboard the good ship Behemoth. I could feel the engines perking, and the swell of the open sea. The pharmacist's mate in charge told me that Jimmy Blake had just been acquitted by a deck court on a charge of A.W.O.L.

I guess, at that, the officers is right. You know, they claim that always means *"after women or liquor."*

Where New York Gets It

—continued from page 19

short, you can do anything you might be doing at home while taking a drink from your private cellar, for the apartment saloon is simply a person's home, where a limited clientele can buy a drink at a reasonable price.

Probably the first patron of the apartment saloon was the owner himself. Next came friends of the family. Then one man told another. Finally fifty or a hundred persons fell into the habit of dropping into this apartment when thirst overcame them.

HIGH-BALLS, gin rickeys, cocktails, ale, and even champagne at the more toney saloons, are on tap. A bowl of mints and shelled English walnuts adorns the center table in lieu of the traditional skittles, cheese, and crackers above the old brass rail. You can send out for sandwiches and other edibles to the corner delicatessen, should you hunger as well as thirst. Payment is made quietly, almost painlessly, at from fifty to seventy-five cents a drink.

The host weaves in and out of the group, serving drinks, and occasionally joining the conversation when he perceives the fruit of his ripe wisdom will settle a moot point. Since most of these apartment saloons are located in the theater district, patrons are actors, actresses, men about town, persons on their way to a party just stopped in for a "spark," persons returning from a party, in for a "bracer," part-time philosophers—all the thousand and one types that make of life the kaleidoscopic thing it is.

Through the evening's conversation plays the obligato of the apartment bell, twice repeated, and the steady ringing of the telephone. Two sad young men enter, en route to romance. As they go out, a portly gentleman hurries in with a ten dollar bill in one hand, and hurries out to his companion and a taxi with two quarts of Scotch in the other. A dapper, confident young Irishman, attired in a symphony of blue, capers in. He happens to be a detective, making the rounds. This is his night for "collecting." A matter of protection. Everybody in New York is agreed that "you gotta live." No one begrudges him his tithe.

Because of the comfort, homelikeness, and economy of the apartment saloon, the idea has taken hold and spread. One has all the privileges of home, without any of the obligations. New Yorkers like it.

And lastly, for those who like to continue their drinking on into the early morning hours, comes the night club, most colorful facet of the many-sided life of New York. It is the domain of high kicking and low thinking. The astute District Attorney, Emory R. Buckner, hurls padlocks at the night clubs as a small boy at a circus bombards the nigger babies. He brings down a few, but New York re-racks them, and the circus goes merrily on.

The night clubs change their names, and bob up again gaudier and gayer. Richly caparisoned merriment allures the fool and his gold, and the wise occasionally drop in to watch the ever fascinating spectacle. Celebrities dine and dance for nothing, so that Mr. and Mrs. Outoftown can look on and be thrilled—while footing the bill. Backers of the clubs range from former waiters, well-to-do bootleggers, and yeggs, to members of the Social Register. There is about the night club for some people that glittering high life for which they are ever looking, for others a sense of exclusiveness which goes with a white shirt-front, and for the merrier that "one touch of vulgarity which makes the whole world kin." And so, do what he will, Mr. Buckner has as yet failed to change the Charleston to the lock-step.

Nevertheless, the night club isn't doing so well—except in isolated instances where it is doing better than ever before. Barnum was not the first nor the last to prove that people like to be fooled. But they tire of being made suckers in the same way all the time. Even the dizzy ones are now demanding more of a night club than gaudy investiture, reenforced batteries of saxophones, and gladder and madder hotsy-totsy songs. Night clubs open and close with monotonous regularity. The few that remain year in and out have something to offer. It may be a head waiter whose charm and good manners attract a distinguished group of people nightly whom others less noted wish to see. It may be an exceptional dancing team like Maurice and his partner, Moss and Fontana, or Mary Hay and Clifton Webb; a blue-blooded curiosity like Roger Wolfe Kahn and his orchestra; or a vivid personality like Texas Guinan.

IN MANHATTAN there are three colorful centers of after-midnight activity —Greenwich Village, Broadway, and the Harlem black and tan belt. There the clink of ice in frosted glasses, the ensnaring melody of violin jazz, the beguiling laugh of a blonde on the loose, the flash of come-hither eyes, and the dazzling performances of fabulously paid entertainers, while away the early morning hours until dawn creeps into the tired street along with the satiated habitués. At most of these clubs, except the out-and-out gyp places, you are expected to bring your own liquor. That is, the "hard stuff." The night club will gladly sell you ginger ale or other twenty cent table waters for a dollar a bottle.

An effort is being made to ring a curfew on the night clubs at three a. m. with the beginning of 1927. But whether easy-going New York will actually screw down the lid that tight, or whether the night club owners will find some way of evading the edict remains to be seen. In my various investigations among the night clubs—made, shall we say, for the purpose of collecting material for this article —I stayed beyond the hour of three, in some cases. It seemed to me the fun for many was just beginning.

Proprietors, with from thirty thousand to sixty thousand dollars invested in decorations, contracts with dancers at two thousand five hundred or three thousand

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five hundred weekly, and orchestras at half the sum, feel safer if their patrons do their own bootlegging. Less reputable night clubs still take a chance, but the consumer pays through the nose. Besides, it's cheaper and safer to bring your own bottle of Scotch at five dollars a bottle, than to pay a dollar an ounce for the house's dubious liquor—in addition to the three-fifty or five dollar couvert charge per person. In all the night clubs the itching palm is encased only in a velvet glove. A night's conviviality, while it can be managed for twenty-five dollars, is much more likely to cost fifty, a hundred, and up, as they say in the advertisements. A few of the most popular night clubs are worth the price of departure.

Entrance to one club uptown is gained through a brilliantly lighted door, remarkably like the keyhole of a padlock. Inside is more gayety. The lights dim as you sit down. Around you are faces from the rotogravure sections, society leaders, the upper crust of all activities. Half a dozen baby spots spill their molten gold on the polished floor.

A long ride in a taxi up Fifth Avenue and through the Bronx plunges you into Harlem, and you tumble down a flight of steps into the Stygian atmosphere of a negro night club. Table lamps are golden blobs in prevailing gloom. Eyeballs shine like fireflies in a mist.

Blue songs, whining and melodious. Dancing, abandoned, primitive. Gayety in fever. Joy in a death rattle! Perhaps you leave on the tag end of a popular night club song:

You can search the whole world over,
But you'll never find a sucker like me.

If you are still intoxicated from the night's adventures, you may hum it lightly as you consider the hundred and fifty dollars spent for the whirl about town. If you are coming out of your cloudy world of make-believe as the sun is coming out of the purple morning mist, you may sing it on a sourer note.

A Synthetic Cinderella—continued from page 65

flights of stairs. Gentle, Peter was, and strong. His arm flashed about Alice as she stumbled on the worn stair carpet . . . Gene Madden always came upstairs ahead of Alice, leaving her the work of dragging Junior after her.

She squeezed Alice's hand as the car shot forward, a deep sense of well-being possessing her . . . She'd like to ride on to Nevermore with Alice and Peter; leave ma and Larry, Gene and pa—yes, Junior too!—out of the picture altogether . . . Alice was laughing, joyously, at something Peter was saying . . . She loved Peter for bringing Alice along!

"S 'A DARN good thing Gene wasn't home tonight," grumbled Lawrence as he and Leone hurried through the dark, semi-deserted streets toward home. Leone had made Peter Garth leave her at Alice's, knowing that Lawrence would be over after the movies with Junior. "He'd raise Ned if he knew Alice didn't get in till twelve. And you can lay off invitin' me to lug Junior around, too. Yelled like a Comanche all through the show, ma said. What's the idea of taking Alice along on your dates, anyway?"

"Chaperon," sneered Leone. "Maybe Dave wouldn't mind my going so much if he heard I was properly policed . . . But listen, Larry, let's stop scrapping, if we can, for five minutes . . . Alice asked me to lend her the money to buy an electric washer—Gene won't get her one—and I told her I'd give it to her myself. I wouldn't let on to her that I didn't have the money . . . Larry, she needs the thing. I can get it on monthly payments, of course, but ma'd catch on and tell her. Give me half, will you, and I'll pay you back in instalments."

"I'll tell the starlit world I won't," declaimed Lawrence. "Let that big stuffed shirt of hers get it. He's draggin' down seventy-five per, and won't miss it."

"You're lying, Larry." Leone's heart fluttered convulsively. "He isn't getting that. He's getting forty-five. Alice told me."

Lawrence paused under a street light and scowled down at his sister. "Don't tell me," he grated, "that any guy can step out with Myrtle Sobilski *and* keep up any kind of a shack on forty-five per! I work in the same shop as Gene, and I know!"

"Larry," Leone's voice was husky, "who's Myrtle Sobilski?"

"She's Gene's lady friend," her brother enunciated distinctly, "and you can spill it to Alice and ma any time you like if you think it'll do any good, but I'm tellin' you it won't. What can Alice do about it—with one kid here and another ——"

"Larry," gulped Leone, "walk slow . . . Look here, Larry, listen now—we—you and I—why, we've got to *do* something!"

"Yeh? What?"

"Well," she floundered, "you could go to Gene and tell him you know——"

"He knows I know!"

"And you haven't done a thing about it?" cried Leone. "As soon as we get home I'm going to wake pa up and tell him!"

"It'll be secondhand news to pa."

"You lie!"

"Polite, you are," said Lawrence equably, his tone carrying conviction of pa's knowledge. "Learn it from the Gold Bug?"

"Mind telling me," she forced a calm tone, "just why you rail at Peter Garth's kind for doing the things you condone in Gene?"

"I don't rail at 'um," her hard young brother assured her. "Go as far as they like, only not with *my* sister."

"Alice is your sister, isn't she?"

"Leone," yelped Lawrence, "you're plain dumb! Gene's married to Alice, isn't he?"

"And because he is he can do anything he likes, I suppose! What becomes of ma's pet ideas of the love of an honest man . . ."

"Bunk!" cried Lawrence. "No man sticks to one woman if he can afford more. Keep 'em broke if you want to keep 'em. If Alice'll move into a better apartment and buy her own washer an' hire a coon to play it, an' run Gene in debt up to his neck for clothes, she'll be takin' that much away from Myrtle, and th' minute it begins to pinch Gene, he'll drop her. That, my smart sis, is where Alice has the bulge on Myrt; Gene's married to Alice, you eighteen carat dumbbell! He's *gotta* stand the gaff. And try to get this. A poor man's more virtuous than a rich one because he hasn't the price to be anything else. He's gotta marry a girl to get her; the fellow with jack can dazzle her—the way Garth's got you dazzled—and get by till he's tired. The poor guy's hooked for keeps. Poor people don't get divorces because they can't afford 'em. Gene's so darn sick of Alice he'd give a lot not to have to see her or Junior again, but there's where our grand old laws stop him. And don't waste your pity on Alice; keep it for yourself, the way you're headed. And lay offa *me* on all of it! If you must horn in, give Alice my tip on the spending gag. And, Leone—I take back what I said earlier this evenin'. You're straight—you couldn't be so dam' dumb if you wasn't." He whirled her swiftly into the apartment entrance. "And don't wake pa up to tell him stale news—there's a good girl—or ma'll emote until mornin' an' I need rest. My arm's stiff from luggin' that kid!"

ACROSS the breakfast table the Blair family faced each other, a full hour ahead of time.

"Was th' clock fast, Leone," yawned Mrs. Blair, clutching a sleazy wrapper about her.

"No." Leone's voice had a flat note, and her eyes were sunken. "I want to talk to all of you."

"If you're goin' to start——" began Lawrence threateningly.

"I am," she answered, and in a hysterical stream she poured out the tale of Gene's defection. Something in her mother's face as she ended gripped her. "Ma," she choked, "this isn't a movie plot. It's happened—it's *Alice!* Don't—don't enjoy it so!"

Her mother jumped. "Who—me? Me enjoy it?" she wailed. Lawrence slammed down the window that gave onto the court. "Ain't I her mother? Don't I know how women suffer an' hide it an' eat their hearts out? Don't I know——"

Duncan Blair's voice filled the room. "Whaddo you know except what you learned out of a book or off a movie screen? You been disappointed all your life that you never had a real pick on me other than bein' stingy . . . Lonie," he turned to the girl, "listen. I've known, like Larry says, but there isn't anythin' I can do. Maybe—" the stark misery in the face of this favorite child of his prodding him on—"maybe in time it'll straighten out. If I had enough money to take care of Allie and Junior I'd 'a told her an' brought her home. But I ain't, an' I never will have. An'—it sounds pretty thick, I know—but Larry's got the answer—run Gene in debt."

"You're talkin', Pa," beamed Lawrence.

"I'll leap on over an' tell Alice myself before I go to work, and with what she's got on Gene he'll have to shut up an' take it. I ain't been too happy over at the shop with the fellows all onto Gene, an' it'll be my turn to yowl when Alice throws the hooks into him." He was gone with a clatter of heavy heels and shrill whistling.

"Pa," gasped Leone, "stop him! You're never going to let him tell Alice?"

Duncan Blair walked around the table and cupped the small white face of his daughter between his hands. "Too bad you had to know, Lonie," he told her, "but—it'll be best in the long run. Alice'll quit bein' Gene's dog right on from this morning . . . It'll be better with her, you'll see." And with unaccustomed gentleness he kissed the white quivering lips before him.

THROUGH the morning hours at Mme. Julie's, Leone's mind was a battlefield. Like an automaton she paraded about, displaying gowns in the manner that had caused Julie to pay her far more than any other manikin. Even as she answered chance questions of customers her mind was with Alice . . . *That* was what it came to . . . They were all alike, good only if they were too poor to be otherwise. What marked the difference between Gene Madden and Peter Garth? Gene had married Alice, that was all . . . Maybe ma was right. Peter'd never mentioned marriage to her . . . Alice had held Gene perhaps a year by truckling to him . . . The way she'd have to truckle to Dave Ketry if she married him.

She whirled dizzily and strolled toward the front of the room . . . She'd hold Dave, say two years at best; after that if she had anything on him she could run him in debt, and fight with him for the balance of her life . . . She wondered if Alice were hurt . . . Alice'd cared for Gene—some—before she married him, whereas Dave meant nothing to *her*. Only ma's everlasting harping on him had ever induced her to tolerate him. And since Peter'd come . . .

Then she saw him, handing a package to Mme. Julie—the negligées they'd sent his sister on approval, no doubt. She wished—she did wish he wasn't so easy to look at, and that her heart'd behave when he spoke. She was willing to bet anything she was in love with him, just like one of ma's fool heroines. And ma was right, she assured herself savagely, as she swung back down the room. It was his clothes, his way, his money that turned her silly. Beside him every other man she knew was a savage. Just why did they have to be so rough? Girls raised in the same surroundings were a darn sight more refined . . .

"Leone!"

Unconsciously she'd turned back and walked toward the front of the room. Peter's hand clutched her wrist. "What's the matter?" he asked anxiously.

"Nothing," she whispered. "Why?"

"Gad," he muttered. "If you could have seen your face as you came along . . . Take lunch with me," he urged.

"Can't."

"Why not?"

"Got to order an electric washer for Alice." She blurted out the words, too confused to think up a lie.

"I'll go with you," he volunteered promptly.

. . . And she knew it wasn't his clothes or money or manners, knew that if he'd been a brick-layer or a taxi bandit instead of an architect and the son of *the* Garths, it would have been the same with her. Knew quite well that her only safety lay in not seeing him again . . .

"No." Her voice grated. "And—Peter—don't call for me again . . . Ma doesn't like it."

"What does she like?" he asked impatiently. "Knew something was wrong with you . . . The firm's sending me to Banff next week and I'd like to tell you about it, If you won't come to lunch, I'll wait outside for you at six and we'll have dinner and go for a ride . . . Leone, I don't care so much whether your mother likes me or not—if you do."

He was gone, and she hadn't told him not to come back! Banff . . . Where was Banff? Sounded Russian. Next week he'd be gone—maybe when he came back he'd have forgotten her. But tonight—— She'd make it hers!

Mme. Julie herself went with Leone to the dressing-room, slipped the evening gown from her shoulders, and pressed her onto a couch.

"The feet," she murmured sympathetically, "they tire. Ah, *chérie*, I know! A year, two years, and then some other work or a shop of your own. For an hour now rest. But in the future be more kind to the young *monsieur*. Who knows—he might be coaxed to finance that little shop that you will have some day."

Ma always said the French had no morals . . . She'd heard it a hundred times . . . Ma! Leone turned her face from the light and cried.

At four o'clock Julie ordered her from the floor for the rest of the afternoon. "I suffer," she told the girl, as she put a cold towel over her face, "to see you march gloomily up and down in my happiest creations. Stay here until six. Then put on the little rose georgette you did not sell this afternoon for the forlorn face, and go out with the young *monsieur*. The frock is yours, *chérie;* and do not forget to value yourself very high when you are wearing it!"

"You're kind, *madame*," whispered Leone. "I'll remember that I'm worth—anyway—a shop!"

THROUGH a meal that choked her, Leone listened to Peter's tale of the Banff trip. Banff, it seemed, was in Canada not Russia. It was cool even now while the city sweltered. Peter was going there on business, but he'd also set upon Banff for his vacation. He'd be gone perhaps two months. That, mused Leone miserably, would be plenty of time in which to forget one of Julie's manikins . . .

Peter was suggesting that she go with him . . . The room and the diners spun dizzily before her . . . Heat, maybe—lack of sleep—worry . . . She ought to tell Peter some of the things ma said of men who asked girls to take these trips with them. To a cool place . . . Fellows with jack could dazzle girls, and drop 'em

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when they got tired. Ma was wise but . . .

"The heat's got you," Peter's voice came from a great distance, "and no wonder. Can you make it out to the car?"

She jerked herself erect and laughed shakily.

"What time is it?" she asked.

"Nearly eight. Was going to take you for a ride, but if you're not feeling well——"

"I'm not," she told him, "but I've got to get home." She rose and preceded him steadily from the room . . . If she could just make the car, get somewhere where he couldn't see her face, be as miserable as she liked without any one knowing . . .

"Hurry, will you?" she pleaded as he helped her into the car. "Ma'll be waiting for me."

"She won't," he contradicted. "I phoned her before I met you that you'd be home later." He swung the car into the thick of the northbound traffic. "She started to say a lot of things but I knew I'd be just as happy if I didn't hear 'em, so I hung up. Telephone's a great invention. Relax a little, if you can, Leone, and take your mind off Julie's chamber of horrors. Why you won't chuck it is beyond me . . . You can't like it—anyway not in July—and Leone I know you like me! If you're helping your folks and feel you can't leave 'em—why, you could go right on helping 'em. So why keep me dangling around with the thermometer hitting ninety . . . You'd like Banff, it's cool——"

"Keep still!" in an agonized squeak. "Don't say cool! Peter, don't say anything at all for a bit, will you?"

"Poor kid," he growled softly. The car lurched, throwing Leone against him. The touch of his shoulder brought comfort, a swift relaxation to taut nerves. Always it had been so with her . . . The miles she'd danced on aching arches just to touch him, to feel his strong fingers, the protection of his arm! She sagged a bit closer, stealing a hurried glance at him. He was smiling a little, with sheer content. He liked her, would like her for maybe a long while; anyway as long as Gene had cared for Alice . . . It all came to that in the end anyway—they got tired of you. And being able to hold them because you had something on them—a legal whip to crack over them—didn't sound like happiness . . . When Peter tired she'd just pop out . . . It was all God's fault, anyway. The way He ran His world! Casting her lot with people who set her teeth on edge and then throwing Peter Garth in her way! What'd He expect?

"Who?" asked Peter, as the car flashed past the swinging lights of the yacht harbor.

"God," she answered, without thinking. Then she sat erect. Had she gone off her head a bit with the whole ghastly mess? Had she, *of all things*, been talking out loud?

"Peter," she gasped, "what'd I say?"

"Said you wondered what he expected, and I thought you might mean me. But if it's God you're on the outs with——"

"Was that all I said?"

"Yep. All right to talk to you now."

"If," she bargained in panic, "you won't say anything I don't want to hear."

"Fair enough," he conceded. "You know, Leone, you'll never—altogether—know what God expects, but I'm more than willing to tell you what I expect—hope, rather. All right to go on?"

. . . This was what ma had warned her of . . . What a knowing old thing ma was! They all expected something, according to ma . . . Well . . .

A strangled hiccough escaped her. Peter's voice boomed softly in her ear.

"All right, I'm not going to say it. Take off that dam' tight hat and give your head a chance. Just watch the lake and forget I'm here."

The breeze ran cool fingers through her short hair; some of the tightness left her throat. She was a fool, she assured herself.

The brighter lights of the Drive had been left behind. The white shafts in the cemetery beside the lake gleamed cool in the summer dusk. How blissful to be done with all the wretched questions of life . . . Had any of *them* ever fought to tear their hearts out and lay them on the cold altar of convention? If they had they must enjoy being dead!

Over the bridge in the little park that edged the lake Peter halted the car. From the Inn snatches of music floated to them . . . Peter's arm was about her shoulders, his strong fingers gripped hers.

"I know I'm asking a lot, Leone," he was saying, "but won't you understand? I can take you out of a life I know you hate, away from your mother's everlasting harping and Julie's shop . . . Banff—it's all right to talk of it now, isn't it—you'll love Banff. I can give you all the things a girl wants. And, Leone—if you care a little—there's me thrown in. You will?"

. . . It was all wrong. Wrong that her arm clutched tightly about his great frame, wrong that her head found haven under his chin, wrong that his voice blurred through her mop of bobbed hair in a torrent of love words. Happiness was always wrong. To be good one must be miserable . . . ma said . . . Ah, but ma was *old*. Her fingers clutched Peter's coat.

"There's one special thing I'd like to ask you." Peter's chin bumped softly on the top of her head as he spoke. "Are you listening, Leone?"

Reluctantly she left her dream, forcing herself to clear attention.

"Promise you won't be angry?" he bargained.

"Promise."

"Well—now remember, Leone, you promised—your mother is—er—a bit heavy . . . woobly—you know what I mean . . . And it'd only be for once, but Leone, couldn't you persuade her to wear one of those brassière things at our wedding?"

. . . God knew how to run His world! Through time He'd been shaping it toward perfection, to throw it, and its king, into the lap of Leone Blair! Perhaps a hundred years of torment would expiate her doubt . . . She didn't deserve happiness—or Peter—or——

"*Leone!*" his voice rose and cracked. "You promised not to be angry and now you're crying . . . All right," savagely, reaching for the wheel, "let 'r come in 'er dressing-gown then!"

———

The Taxi Girl and the Oranges

—continued from page 50

like." But he turned his head away quickly.

"Roly! Am I going to have to spank you? Shame on you for talking so!"

"Forgive me, honey. I didn't mean to sound bitter. Just my crude way of trying to be a humorist. Sure, call Tommy in. He's a great little pal."

Tommy came in with the sedate diffidence of the child who is always alone or with older people. He was a sober little freckle-faced fellow with sandy hair and sandy eyes that looked at the world through unbecoming spectacles.

"Tommy," said Joyce, giving him a kiss—for which he looked surprised and grateful, as he always did—"you'll play nice with my Roly?"

"Yes," said Tommy. "I've got some new crayons for you, Mr. Winter."

"Fine! Bring along the equipment, Tommy! The drawing board, the paper, and all the available pencils and crayons. Genius burns."

"Roly, it does amuse you to amuse Tommy? It doesn't tire you?"

"Immensely. Not a bit. We're real artists, aren't we, Tommy? Art for art's sake with us. Good-bye, honey. Take care of my little taxi-girl model."

Joyce kissed her husband swiftly; it was always hard to leave him and it was best done quickly.

"I will. Take care of my patient patiently."

"Honey—it's just your face this Herkimer guy's going to do?"

"Of course, silly! Good-bye, boys. Be good."

When she had gone, "Funny or pretty pictures today, Tommy?" asked Roland, getting in as comfortable a position as he could for the purpose of amusing his young guest.

"Both," said Tommy, sitting on the bed close to his elbow. "All kinds."

"Whew, that's a large order. Well, here goes."

AND so the day passed, as had others before it, as did others that came after. They did not vary their monotony. Joyce worked, she posed, she danced. Roland lay in bed deploring her activities, resenting his own helplessness, trying to seem uncomplaining, trying to think he would soon be well. Long days, slow passing days. And at the end of a week a rainy day, with water sluicing drearily against the windows.

Tommy, as usual waiting for a picture to be finished, sat looking out the window.

"She's coming home in an auto," he announced suddenly. "Gee, Mr. Winter, it's a big one! There's a man in front dressed like a soldier. And the man's getting out 'n standing in the rain. Without his hat. He's holding her hand. And leaning over her. Why, Mr. Winter, she's crying!"

But she wasn't when she came in. And nothing was said about the scene Tommy had described.

"Not another word about it, son!" Mr. Winter had said sharply. And even Tommy had asked Mrs. Winter no questions as he showed her the afternoon's output of funny drawings and crayon sketches.

Every day thereafter Joyce went out as usual. Every day there were oranges in the dish, though Joyce seemed to care very little for them since they were plentiful. She only ate one now and then when Roland begged her to. As he lay alone, brooding in spite of himself, the golden oranges in the dish took on a disquieting symbolism for Roland Winter. They were the signs of the prosperity that had come to them since Joyce met Scott Herkimer. There had never been oranges enough before that night. Since, there were more than enough. The dish was always full. Joyce kept it that way. On Herkimer's money, and the money she made dancing, dancing, dancing—damn the luck! This Herkimer—he had barrels of money. If Joyce were free—— The thoughts that came after that thought were invariably cruel, burning, stabbing, torturing thoughts.

"I ought to die!" he would moan aloud, if he was alone. Then he would bury his face in his pillow—and see Joyce, her face buried in his covers, kneeling beside him in the blue frock that was wearing out and couldn't be replaced.

"You're all I've got," she had said. "What could I do without you, Roly?"

Only the most despicable of cowards could voluntarily leave the woman who loved him alone in the world, when he *might* get well. She might learn to love some one else, though—if she were free. God, to be crushing her with his dead weight, when he adored her! His fragrant, sweet, high-spirited little Joyce—it was like stepping on a violet. And he could do nothing, nothing, but lie in bed and watch her struggles to support him, watch her grow thinner and tireder and braver every day. The physical pain he had endured was pleasant compared to the anguish Roland Winter knew thrashing about in the icy waters of his thoughts.

In such a dark mood Dr. Jackson found him one day. Roland had tried to read. He had made pastel sketches of clouds and chimney pots, for his own diversion as well as for Tommy's. But he had not been diverted; and he had abandoned his occupations and given himself up to his worries.

"In the doldrums, ain't you? Snap out of it, my boy. You got a dyspeptic look about you it ain't your privilege to wear," said the brusque old doctor, scratching his cheek as he studied his patient. "The missis been gone maybe an hour? That accounts for it. You're a dandelion. You can't open up into a smile without her pretty eyes on you."

He lifted a chair and planked it down beside the bed.

"Well," he said, seating himself with his hands on his fat thighs, elbows spread, finger-tips touching, "where's your belly-ache today?"

Roland smiled wanly.

"In my heart," he said, placing one thin hand on his diaphragm, "and my head."

"Your heart ain't there, and what you wear for a head resembles a cabbage,

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pretty much. Let me see your tongue. H'm. A sick man like you ought to be layin' brick."

"Doc," said Roland, "tell me the God's truth. Am I ever going to get up out of this bed?"

"Why should I tell you the truth? You ain't believed me yet. If St. Peter ain't more trusting than you are there won't be a liar in heaven, present company excepted," Dr. Jackson replied cheerfully.

But his cheerfulness had not its usual cheering effect on Roland Winter.

"Dr. Jackson," he said earnestly, "we can't go on like this forever. Isn't there—some place—you could take me?"

"Back to the hospital you were so set on getting out of?"

"No. Some place where they'd take me—for nothing."

"H'm. You want a bed in a charity ward? County hospital cot, maybe? Don't think you'd like the accommodations, my boy."

"WHAT the devil difference does that make? Can't you see it's killing my wife, this scrimping and slaving? Oh, she's too proud to let your know what a hard time she's having. But can't you tell just to look at her she wasn't brought up to it?" He waved his hand with a disdainful gesture toward their shabby surroundings. "Every penny we have she earns, God bless her. While I lie here—and draw pictures for the neighbor's kid. Hell!"

"Right good pictures, too," remarked Dr. Jackson, picking several up to examine them. "Didn't know you were an artist."

"No? Don't tell me any more good jokes. I don't feel like handing you a laugh."

"This one, now," Dr. Jackson went on, eyeing a study in crayon of a vermilion sunset flaming above smoke-stacks, "it's right natural. Like to let me have it? Reckon it's worth about as much to me as this call of mine is to you."

Roland reached for the sheet of drawing paper and tore it into bits.

"You're a bum actor," he said gently. "I wasn't asking for charity from you!"

"I wasn't offering you any, sir," said Dr. Jackson huffily. "I liked that picture. What'd you have to go tear it up like a spoiled brat for?"

"I'm sorry," said Roland, endeavoring to placate him. "I'll make you a dozen more."

"Save your chalk. I won't buy more'n one."

"You won't *buy* any."

"Then I won't *take* any, you young fool," said Dr. Jackson.

"Then you won't," agreed Roland wearily.

They let it go at that.

"You don't deserve the information I expected to give you," said Dr. Jackson, as he prepared to leave, "so I won't give it to you."

"What was it?"

"That you'll soon be as well as you are stubborn, if you'll snap out of your doldrums. Better not try to get up yet. But it ain't your toothpick legs that's the trouble now so much as it's your cabbage head. Use it to get well or else make sauerkraut of it." And he stamped out.

Roland laughed and felt better, as he usually did during Dr. Jackson's calls. But when the old practitioner had gone, he remembered that for days and weeks and months Dr. Jackson had said he would get well. It was the old prediction, the old hope, the old despair, all over. "Better not try to get up," was the order. When, when would it be, 'Get up and walk?' When, if ever? He turned his face to the wall, hoping to sleep, when he was startled by a rap on the door.

"Come in."

"Sorry, old man."

It wasn't Dr. Jackson, coming back for something. It was a stranger.

"Anything I can do for you?" Roland asked, surprised.

"Sorry to have disturbed you," the stranger repeated, advancing into the room. "A little freckle-faced boy directed me here."

"Looking for me?"

"No, for a young lady. One of my models—Joyce Winter by name."

"She's one of my wives," said Roland dryly, placing himself so that he might look squarely at his caller—a dapper man he was, from swagger stick to spats. "In fact, my only one. So you're Scott Herkimer."

"The artist, yes. And did I understand you to say you are Joyce Winter's—ah, husband?"

"I didn't say. But I am."

"She never mentioned you. Odd."

"You think so? She has told me all about *you.*" Roland could not explain this unreasoning irritation, which brought the lie to his lips.

"No! Well, why not? Is she here?"

"No."

"Most provoking!"

"Wasn't she at your studio this afternoon?"

"At my studio? She hasn't been there for a week or more. Not since I brought her home one very wet Friday."

"She hasn't? Why——" Roland remembered the day. And Joyce had been out every afternoon since, ostensibly to Herkimer's!

"No. That's always the trouble of engaging a model who isn't a professional. But this Joyce was a sweet little thing——"

"She is, indeed."

"Oh, yes, she's your wife you said. Well, then you know how she is. May I sit down?" He dusted a spotless chair with his gloves. "Have a fag?"

"Do. No, thanks."

"I got her face in a dozen different sketches. Wasted a lot of time that way just for the fun of the thing. Fascinating expressions, you know. I was going to do a wood nymph canvas. Don't you think she's the type?"

"Yes."

"And when it came right down to sitting for the real job—for the figure, you know—she wept. Ah—cried. As if I were insulting her! I didn't think anything about it, just told her casually that's what I'd need her for the next day, and she burst into tears on my shoulder. Not literally, of course, but you know what I mean. There I was standing in the rain——. Deuced uncomfortable!"

"I can imagine; for both of you."

"Just business with me. But an amateur model never understands. They always cry about something, sooner or later."

"Poor kids!"

"Why, they like to cry. All women do. Men are brutes if they don't make 'em. But I never like to be bothered when I'm busy," declared Scott Herkimer. "This —er, your wife seemed to need the money so I thought she'd come back. And in the meantime I got another idea for her. I want to do her as a gypsy. Don't you think she's the type?"

"Yes."

"She'd be, of course, er—fully clothed. You'll see her again, won't you?"

"I hope so."

"That's right, she's your wife. I keep forgetting. She seems such an infant."

"She's every inch a woman."

"I believe that, too. Well, you tell her to come round. I need her."

He arose, adjusting the brim of his hat between his fingers.

"Good-day, old man. Glad I met you. Say, ah—are you sick?"

Roland emitted an unwilling, short bark, resembling a laugh.

"No, I just went to bed for a nap about twelve months ago. And neglected to get up again. That's all. Oh, no, I'm not sick."

Scott Herkimer leaned over the bed sucking his cane with a vacuous expression of incredulity on his face.

"You've been sick a year, old man? A *year?*"

"So they tell me. It seems a hundred."

"But what do you do all day? There's nothing to do in bed all day, you know. I don't suppose you can sleep all the time?"

Roland laughed again, this time very directly in the puckered, puzzled, sympathetic face of his interrogator. He reached for a pad and pencil.

"Hist, I'm an artist," he said. "I draw funny pictures. Behold!"

With a few quick strokes he sketched Scott Herkimer with a look of comic concern upon his features that was as laughable as it was intended to be. Herkimer took up the caricature and regarded his likeness without a smile.

"Do another," he commanded.

"Louder and funnier! All right," assented Roland. "Tommy eats these up. You're about his age, I'd say."

His mental picture of Joyce weeping—of Herkimer dusting her furniture before he sat upon it—sharpened his pencil for retaliation. He took back the caricature, put a cage about Herkimer's figure, and drew several jungle creatures gazing through the bars at him. Their expressions were fantastically human and they were dressed like human beings, but their ancestry was unmistakable. "Was Darwin wrong?" was the caption of the impertinent sketch.

"How's that?" asked Roland blandly.

"You do this for a living?"

"What? This stuff?"

"You're not on a paper, then?"

"Paper? Me?"

"Aren't you a newspaper cartoonist?"

"Lord no," said Roland. "Are you trying to kid me that I *am* an artist?"

Herkimer shuddered.

"Certainly not an artist! But you have the makings of a jolly good cartoonist."

"Well, say," said Roland, raising himself on one elbow, "if I'm an artist I should have sold that sunset to Dr. Jackson. I'll have to enter your profession."

"Not *mine*," Herkimer protested again, reaching for his card case. "But if you'll send some of your stuff and my card to this man—editor of the *Morning News*, you know—I shouldn't be at all surprised if he could use you. I'll speak to him. He's a friend of mine. He's looking for a staff cartoonist who won't demand top prices. And this caricature is really ripping, old man."

"My God! Do you mean it? I can make money here in bed? Drawing these fool things?"

"You'll make money, I can promise you," said Scott Herkimer, putting on a glove. "Ah—you must need it, I'd think? Jolly costly, being sick, what? Deuced tiresome, too. I'll—ah—I'll say good afternoon."

"Thank you, Mr. Herkimer. And I want to apologize for trying to rag you by that caricature. It wasn't sporting. But I was in a vicious humor."

"Don't bother, don't bother. I should be myself, in your place. No—ah—no offence taken, old man. Now you won't forget I need this little Joyce?"

"For the gypsy?"

"Yes, yes, I finished the other without her. Not quite satisfied with it. But it's done. But I believe this gypsy canvas will be one of my best pieces. She's just the type."

"For everything beautiful."

"Well, send her around."

As abruptly as he had appeared, Scott Herkimer vanished. Minutes were interminable, then, until Joyce returned to Winter Quarters. She came in droopingly.

"Woman," reproached Roland sternly, aching to tell her the news, "where have you been?"

"There's no use trying to keep it from you any longer, Roly," she burst out. "I lost my model job last week. I lose 'em all! Every job I get." She dropped beside him wearily. "Every afternoon I've been hunting another. But a model with scruples is no good around a studio."

"You're dead wrong, darling. Herkimer was here this afternoon. He wants you to pose for him——"

"I won't——"

"In the full regalia of a gypsy."

"Oh! Oh, Roly, what luck!"

"And more!" cried Roland Winter. "Lots more. Listen, darling——"

And then he told her his great news, the last of it with his lips very close to her ear. "You'll never have to dance again, pet."

"Oh, but I will, lots of times—with you!"

"YOU bet. With me. I'll be dancing again soon now. Doc Jackson says so, and I believe him."

"Now begin at the beginning and tell me all over again, everything," commanded Joyce. "Can you *really* draw, Roly?"

"It isn't for me to say," Roland hedged with mock modesty . . .

When they had talked it over and over until it began to seem true: "Joyce," said Roland, "it's been filled all the time

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lately. You're a good provider. But it's a man's job to keep the oranges in the dish. Lord, I'm glad to be taking it over."

Joyce giggled.

"I promised I'd never, never let it get empty if you were going to call yourself names, didn't I?" she asked proudly. "And I've kept you in luxury, haven't I?"

"Yes. But I've hated the blokes whose money bought those oranges for us. Let's eat 'em up, sweetheart. *I'll* buy the next lot, a dozen at a throw. What d'you say, darling?"

"I say I love you, Roly, and I think you're awful smart. But I never saw the man yet who was as smart as his wife!"

She ran over to the table and got her emerald fruit bowl.

"Look, see, feel, smell!" she smiled, "but let's don't eat them. Couldn't you be satisfied with something else?"

Roland could.

"You darling little fraud!" he laughed in hearty amusement. And took another kiss.

There were oranges in the dish. But they were artificial.

Diary of a Little French Girl

—continued from page 67

flappaires, they certainly make one think.

Well, I gave Mlle. Cora my most serious attention. I told her to be chic she must take the little feather out of her hat. She must take the lace off her satin frock, all of it. She must wear plain pumps, plain pull-on gloves, plain everything, because she herself was pretty. I told her to look smart she must look simple, and if she wanted to *be* smart, well then she must look even more simple than that.

When I had all finished Cora said:

"Oh, Madame de Soie, I just love to hear you talk. Your accent is perfectly fascinating! Aren't all our men crazy over you?"

"Some are crazy, yes," I said, "but it has nothing to do with me."

She laughed then, this flappaire, as only women laugh whose hearts are free from care.

"What did the twenty-five-a-week want?" asked Ethel, as Cora left.

"She wants to be Frenchy."

"*Be* Frenchy! Say, Madame, at that age they can teach us both. *Be* Frenchy! That's a good one! I'll bet she only came to look."

Ethel is really phenomenal. Cora, I realized, did not buy a thing!

Re Poppy Lane, alias Dorothea Dresden, alias what?

HER perfume preceded her, which was bad—not the perfume but the form. A woman's perfume should be a souvenir, not a call to arms.

So, on entering my salon I sniffed with the same slightly disdainful air as a thoroughbred. Miss Dresden, quick as lightning in thought, drawled slowly:

"Don't you like my perfume?"

"I think it is poisonous," I said.

"Well, you named me after a pretty poisonous flower," Poppy Lane retorted.

"Pretty, yes, but not poisonous. And now, *mad moiselle*, that you are acquiring a new individuality, of a certainty you must have a distinctive perfume. One made especially for you." She liked that!

"We will choose it after the gowns. Tell me first, what do you want to look like?"

Without hesitating, she answered:

"I want to look like the worst woman in New York."

"What you call, vamp, yes? Tell me why. One should know causes to get effects."

"Oh, he's that kind of a man. Smokes his cigars with the band on, you know. Afraid people will think he can't afford the best. But my label is up to you, *Madame*. I have a check with me for a thousand and will tag it on anything you say."

For over two hours I worked with her. I had already selected her outfit, and had Ethel and a fitter both helping. She was wonderful to dress. Her body was flawless.

The scheme was simple. She was to wear nothing but black and scarlet. Day and evening. Her name was to be emphasized in every way. All her jewelry, the clasps for her purses, her buckles, were to be the same design: a small poppy, like a monogram, was to be handworked on everything she bought.

Already I had made especially several large scarlet chiffon poppies for her shoulders. Always they would be perfumed. Her handkerchiefs, in black crêpe de Chine by day and scarlet chiffon by night were large and circular, a double frill of scalloped edges giving the effect of the flower.

I think at first she was disappointed in the idea, until in the triple mirror she saw herself dressed.

Then she knew I had done wisely. Oh, but she was marvelous! She looked so beautifully wicked.

I thought of Cora, the flappaire, like a little robin redbreast hopping from bough to bough. This girl was an eagle. Ah, yes, nests would be in danger . . .

I gave her black chiffon lingerie, and one negligée of layers of scarlet chiffon.

"This should be over flesh," I said to Ethel, noticing its fine transparency.

"It will be," replied Ethel, looking furtively at Miss Lane. It is true we had by now seen practically all of her. But to me only ugliness is shocking—and the venom of some homely women.

I gave her large and small hats, all black or all scarlet; and scarlet heels to all her shoes. This touch was what Cora, the flappaire, had suggested to me. That one must advertise from behind as well as in front.

When Ethel saw the red heels I heard her remark to the fitter:

"Say, this fancy dame is going to get all the stray dogs of the village trailing at her heels." The thin little fitter sniggered. The nearest she had ever got to a thrill, I imagine, was in fitting Miss Lane.

After thirty-five years of virtue I some-

times wonder what value some women place on it.

Ethel, who is always curious because at heart she is ambitious, spoke to me after the girl had left.

"You are so obviously a lady yourself, *madame,* that I cannot understand how you can interest yourself in people like this Poppy Lane. You touched her as though you liked her. It beats me."

"Ah, Ethel," I answered, "we only hate what we fear . . .

"To see only the surface of a woman is to be sometimes afraid of her. But if you see deep into a woman's heart, you usually find there is grief. And when you see her sorrow it stills your fear.

"Do you know, Ethel, at first I was going to call her Camellia, and give her scarlet camellias instead of poppies; because she is really too fragile looking, too suggestive of a hothouse for a poppy. But I am superstitious. I was afraid to call her the new Lady with the Camellias, because her end will probably be as tragic as the original. That beautiful pallor, it is not natural. I have seen it before. I believe she will not live a very long time."

Ethel shivered. She has a tender heart.

"And that is why I touched her with gentle fingers. Do you not sense the pathos of dressing up a sick woman in scarlet?"

"But you gave her the color, *madame,*" said Ethel.

"Yes, because scarlet really signifies life, not passion. Bright red, it stimulates the wearer, and gives her the confidence. She cannot see, *bien entendu,* the whole of her body in black, but she cannot fail to see her scarlet flowers or scarlet handkerchief. And she will draw from them a constant courage."

"Why? Does she know?"

"But, of course! Ah, Ethel, how funny you are. Do you think one talks of all one knows?"

"Well, I hand it to her," said Ethel. "I thought she was just about seventy-five per cent up the wrong street."

"No, no. Poppy Lane ends in a cul-de-sac . . ."

Re a Conference.

I HAVE been curious all the time that I have been at the store to know what it is a conference. It seemed to be something of vast importance. Many times I have heard the secretary say mysteriously to people who come to see him: "Mr. Wolfe is in a conference, and it is quite impossible to disturb him till he comes out." It fascinated me. It sounded as though it were a trance.

Now, today, I found out what it is. Ethel said to me this morning: "Mr. Kingsley wants to see you in his office at eleven o'clock."

I told her I had women every moment except from two-thirty till three o'clock. The appointment was changed to two-thirty. All the morning I was worried over what it could be for.

People say I talk with my eyes. In that case, everybody in the store must know my fears, for since nine o'clock that morning I was sure I was going to lose my job. My contract says one month trial; then if satisfied they take the option. The month trial was three weeks over. Do they take up the option or not? If not, then they pay me my two thousand dollars salary and my fare home again. But I did not want to go. There was only tragedy to go back to . . . And here in America I am at least free.

On the dot of two-thirty I presented myself to Mr. Kingsley's secretary, an important young woman more grand than her position.

"Mr. Kingsley will see you in a few minutes, Madame de Soie," she said. Her tone and look were cool and efficient. She needs her heart broken, I thought, as I was asked to go in.

Kingsley rose to meet me.

"You look quite tragic, *madame.* What's the trouble?" I sat at his side and voiced my fears:

"Am I no good, yes? Give me another month. Please! Please! I will do better, it is all strange, but the people like me and it will grow. You will see, Mr. Kingsley, my clients will grow."

"What are you talking about?" he asked me bewildered.

"I think you fire me, no?" I said, blinking damp eyes. And at that he laughed. Nicely. As a father might with a funny child.

"Why, *madame,* there is no thought of such a thing. You are doing fine. And your option is to be gone into at the board meeting on Monday."

"Then why did you send for me?"

"Why," replied the president calmly, "I just wanted to know if you got home safely with Ossie Baldman last night!"

Well, I was so relieved and so amused that without thinking I got up and flung my arms round Mr. Kingsley's neck and kissed the top of his head.

And at that moment, his efficient secretary opened the door . . .

When Mr. Kingsley's secretary saw me standing behind his back, pleased and flushed, she made as if to go out again. But Mr. Kingsley is big enough for every occasion.

"What is it, Miss Hines?"

"Mr. Wellesley to see you." His answer I shall never forget:

"Tell him I can't see him today. I'm in conference."

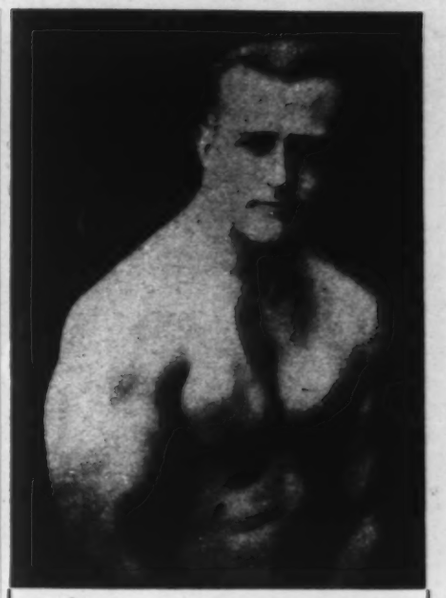
So now I know what it is—a conference!

And Mr. Kingsley, who should have been wild with me for being so impulsive, seemed as pleased as a cat with two tails.

A man who calms a woman's fears, gets nearer her heart than the man who arouses them. I wonder if Kingsley knows that . . .

NEXT MONTH

Very similar to the excitement of a small boy when the circus comes to town is the thrill a woman feels when a fashion show is in prospect. Mouselline provides a number of thrills next month when she tells about three fashion shows she stages—at a private home, at a club, and in a motion picture theater.



The Unpardonable Sin

A man may kick his neighbor, poke him in the nose or throw him down stairs. If he has any kind of an excuse we pass it by. That's all right. But what a fool is the fellow who deliberately kicks himself in the shins. He's a nut. That's all there is to that. It's a sin and offense to abuse others, but there are times when it will be overlooked. Never, however, can we overlook a man's abuse of himself. That is the unpardonable sin which brings destruction.

Are You an Offender?

Check up on yourself, fellow! Are you playing square with yourself? You've got a wonderful body there. Are you giving it all the breaks in life? Do you wake in the morning burning with pep and ambition? Do you still have the keen appetite of a kid? Do you have plenty of snap and zip as you go about your daily work? If not, you're just as bad as the chap who kicks himself in the shins. You're either a real, live, muscular, red-blooded, two-fisted he-man or your body is being given a raw deal. Who's at fault? If no one else is abusing you, it must be yourself.

Stop It!

Cut it out right now. Determine this minute that you're nobody's fool. If you only knew what a strong, robust, healthy body meant, you would have had one long ago. Take it from me, fellow, it's great to be healthy. I've been both ways and I know. Let's you and I work this thing out. What do you say? I'm a muscle builder. I'm a pep builder. I've taken the sickliest looking scare crows you'd ever want to look at, and I've built them up into real big powerful, virile men. Listen to this and I'll shoot you off a few things that are coming your way. In just 30 days, I'm going to add one full inch onto those arms of yours. Yes, and two inches to your chest in the same length of time. But that's nothing. Get this. I'm going to broaden your back and deepen your chest so that every breath you take will drag a full load of oxygen into your lungs, shooting life-giving red corpuscles into every nook and corner of your body. I'll broaden your shoulders and strengthen your neck. I'll put an armor-plate of muscle over that old tummy of yours. I'll shoot a quiver up your spine that will make you feel like turning flip-flops. Meanwhile I'll work on every muscle inside your body pepping up your vital organs and putting fire into your whole system. Good? You're durn tootin' it's good. It's wonderful. And the best of it is—I don't just promise these things. I GUARANTEE THEM. You take no chances with me. It's a sure bet. Well, what do you say? Let's ride.

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Learn the Truth!

Borrowed Clothes

—continued from page 26

became curious, and wanted to know who her steady was. Cherry told them that she had a bite in a cafeteria near the store each evening, and then had walked over to Waverly Place.

"What's the attraction?" frowned Rita, puzzled.

"There's a church over there that burns three torches in the doorway every evening," sighed Cherry. "There's one on each side and one in the center. And they're just beautiful!"

At which the girls merely shrugged their shoulders and threw their eyes up to heaven.

Even I would become a bit baffled when Cherry began to talk about "discovering her subliminal self." Lord knows where she picked that up! She had that quirk for several weeks. And she read everything in sight! Everything! Until her eyes became all raw around the edges, and looked strained.

But the crowning touch came when Rita asked Cherry one night why she went prying around the city all the time. And Cherry looked very pensive and said:

"I'm diving into life's seas after pennies!"

After that, the girls called her the Diving Venus.

So Cherry elbowed her way through the months with lonely determination. She kept a prodigious diary. We couldn't just figure out how some one who had so little happen in her life could spend almost two hours every night writing in a diary.

At any rate, I certainly would like to get a glimpse of it. If it was anything like her conversation, it would be diverting, to say the least. Because Cherry's mind was like a house that was having its shutters taken down and its windows thrown open for the first time.

For instance—her cat! I must tell you about Cherry's cat. She kept it right here in this house. Heaven knows, I have no weakness for cats, and I had my canary bird to consider, too. But Cherry walked in here one evening with a scared look on her face, and a half dead kitten in her arms. She had found some little boys on the street setting fire to the cat's tail. And she had rescued it and brought it home. And when she saw the look of horror on my face, she cried and pleaded and almost choked herself silent with emotion.

WHAT could I do? If a person is that starved for something to love, what a brute I'd be to deprive her! So I let her keep it. And I wish you could have seen! The trouble she went to! She lined a little basket for it, and she bought it cream and little pieces of liver, and now and then some fish. And that cat grew to be a really handsome and sleek animal, with a purr that sounded like the neighbors' snoring.

I remember one night when Rita and Babe were playing with it, they made a remark about cats being treacherous.

"Dogs are the only real friends in the world," said Babe with finality.

"Oh, I don't think dogs amount to so very much," argued Cherry. "They can make violin strings out of cats' guts, and they can make violin bows out of horses' tails, but what part of a dog ever gave us any music?"

Babe threw her a look and piped up: "And the next lecture will be in the Blue Room!"

Whereupon Rita giggled.

You see, nobody ever took Cherry seriously because she took herself so very, very seriously. Nobody paid any attention to her at all. It made me feel terrible. She was ghastly in her loneliness. It cut me to the heart to see a young girl—a sweet, young girl, really—so overlooked. I took her to the movies now and then, or for a bus ride, and once I took her to a concert. But though she liked the music a lot, she kept wondering what all the barbers and dentists and furriers and dressmakers in the audience were thinking about! Imagine!

As a matter of fact, that concert was only three weeks ago. And that was just about the time that the change in Cherry took place.

She met a man. A real man.

And she fell plumb head over heels in love with him! The only men Cherry had known were those she met in business, and though she was proud of attention even from them she was quite dissatisfied with them when she compared them with Babe's and Rita's beaus. They only made her more restless. Until along came this chap . . .

It happened this way. Miss Ryan, the buyer in Cherry's department, asked her to dinner one Sunday night. Miss Ryan's brother had a chap there whom he had gone to school with. And the fellow was Roger Tracy.

Before Cherry went to this dinner party she was frantic for something to wear. So after much fussing we fixed her up in Babe's blue velvet evening gown and blue velvet slippers. She had borrowed them once before, and looked almost beautiful in them. Blue is good for Cherry, though I always say she should wear ultra-violet with those eyes and that hair of hers.

Well, she came home about ten thirty that night, as happy as a kid that had been to a circus. And she sat down over some tea and gingersnaps, and told us all about this Roger Tracy that she had met. Her excitement was pathetic, and it was as genuine as the sun. One could see that she wasn't telling a lot of riotous fibs, and garnishing up the evening with her imagination like she usually did. She just gurgled and bubbled all over. I had to kick Rita under the table, because I could see the girls were all set to tease her.

She described him as about her height —which is not tall—with black hair, and Irish blue eyes.

"He's the kind of a fellow who is handsome even though he wears glasses," she told me. "And oh, he's so strong and *safeish*. You know what I mean."

I laughed and patted her hot, excited little cheek. The boy came from out West somewhere, she told us, and owned

a ranch. How Cherry's eyes sparkled when she told that. Yet he evidently could dance well, had been in New York several times before, and liked the theater.

"He has invited me to a show tomorrow night," she told me later, when we were alone. "Any show I wanted to see. My goodness I was so excited I couldn't think of the name of a single show in New York except Babe's and Rita's which I had seen. But I didn't let on I was excited, of course. I just said I had been working so hard that I hadn't been flitting about much this winter! And he said, 'Working?' And I said, 'Yes, I'm an interior decorator!' "

"Good for you, child," I laughed. "I hope Miss Ryan doesn't give you away."

"NO, she won't," Cherry shook her head confidently. "And I never met her brother before, so he doesn't know who I am. Anyway, Mom, Mr. Tracy was impressed. And he is going to take me to dinner before the theater, and a night club afterwards. All by ourselves! Not on a party, you know. And will you please tell me all about night clubs, Mom, so that I will know just what to do? I wouldn't want him to think I never went anywhere, you know."

"Leave it to me," I smiled. "I'll have you all cued up beautifully, so you can't make a mistake. Where are you having dinner?"

"Well, that's what I don't know," Cherry mused. "He said to meet him in the Astor. And Mom, I won't know about the Astor. I've always been afraid to go into those big hotels. So will you tell me just where to go when I'm inside, and how to meet him? And of course, he will ask me where I'd like to have dinner. And I must know a few places to suggest. Where do Babe and Rita go when they're taken out to dinner? And oh, Mom! what on earth can I wear?"

The next evening, Cherry rushed home after work as fast as she could. And Rita and Babe and I dressed her all up in Rita's sea-green dancing frock. Cherry had had her hair marcelled during her lunch hour. And really, she was a picture. And she wore Babe's black velvet wrap with the big white fox fur collar. And then—just late enough to be right—she went down to the Astor. I blew her to a taxi down, for I didn't want her to be wandering in evening clothes unescorted through the subway.

Life is funny! Sometimes I think that life is a waltz and subtly reverses just to keep us from getting dizzy. That poor kid came home at two a. m., and we had all waited up for her. We put out the lights when we heard her coming, and in the dark we listened to her say good night to her beau. As soon as he had left, we snapped on the lights again and bore down on her. Such a change! Cherry was a radiant woman of the world! Everything had gone perfectly—to the last detail. They had had dinner at Chez Fischer, they had seen a musical comedy, and then they had gone to Ciro's to dance. Just think what it meant to Cherry who had never been anywhere! And Roger Tracy had worn a tuxedo, and taxied her everywhere! And he told her about the big Paige car he owned at home; and had talked to her a lot about being the black

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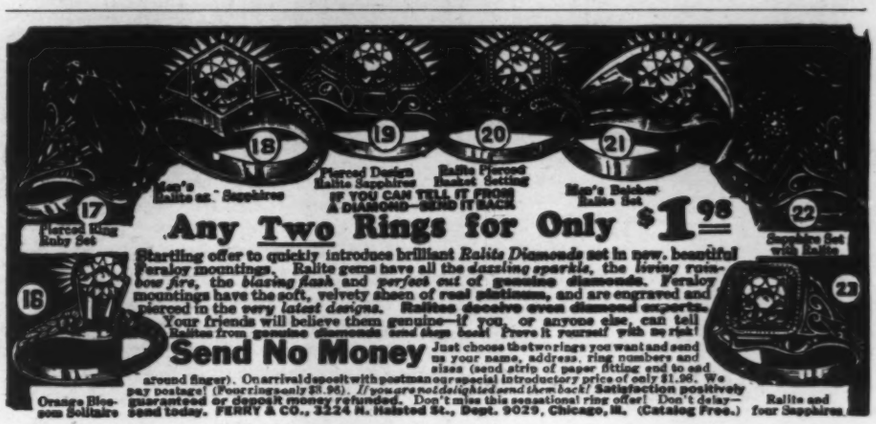

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sheep of a very fine old family, and going out and starting this ranch. Evidently he had made very good with the ranch. And he was twenty-five years old and unmarried.

He was only to be in town for a week, and he had dated Cherry up for five nights! She had pretended to have dates for the other two, although it almost broke her heart to forfeit the good times. Fall? She had fallen like a tree struck by lightning. Love was shining through those strange tawny eyes of hers, and almost transfigured her.

Well, my dear! The next night they were to have dinner, and take a long ride in one of those funny old hansom cabs through Central Park. Just to talk and get acquainted. Cherry had suggested it, because Rita had done it once! So we loaned her Babe's new blue duvetyn suit with the squirrel collar. Lord knows the girls were good to her. They'd lend her anything they had.

That night, when she came home, her eyes were full of tears. He had kissed her hand while they were riding through the spring glory of the park—and when he had left her at the door he had asked to kiss her good night!

"I think he's crazy about me, Mom," she said, her voice trembling.

Well! Cherry had gotten to that place where she went walking through the hours in a daze! You had to speak to her twice before she heard you. The girls laughed and said she had it bad. And all of us would discuss the matter together and agree that Cherry was doing pretty well in life if she could knock down a chap that owned a ranch and a car and seemed so nice.

The next night we were pretty frantic. Cherry couldn't wear red, and she looked terrible in yellow, and we had a hard time digging up something she could wear. But Rita hauled out an old gold lace dress of hers, and I dipped the under slip in violet dye, and pressed it, and put a fresh flower on the gold lace part, and had it all ready for Cherry when she came home that night.

I'll never forget when she was dressing, she turned to me with a frightened look in her eyes, and half whispered:

"Mom, what would I ever do about all these beautiful clothes if—if anything—if things came true, I mean. I couldn't ever tell him the truth——"

"Sh!" I smiled. "Don't cross that bridge until you come to it. We'd all help you out some way, Cherry. You could count on us. There's lots of ways of mixing dough!"

And she suddenly threw her arms around my neck, and kissed me and held me tightly to her.

Well, she went to dinner again and to the theater. And taking her home in a cab Roger Tracy held her very close and kissed her, and told her that he loved her, and that he wished he wasn't a Westerner and a ranchman, but a New Yorker who lived in her world. Whereupon Cherry told him that she was tired of the city, and she thought a ranch must be heaven! But he didn't answer, except to smile—sadly, she thought—and shake his head, and break into a little love song they had heard at the show.

She confided all that to me after the girls had gone to bed. And she asked me what I thought was the matter.

"I know he loves me, Mom," she said. "It's in his eyes. And in everything he says. I guess a girl can tell, all right. And we get along so well together. We are never at a loss for something interesting to talk about. I never enjoyed any one so much before and I know he feels the same way. Mom, I'm—I'm just wild about him. Mom—how can I make him propose to me?"

"YOU'RE a bit quick," I smiled. "You've only known him four days."

"I know. But he's going back West on Sunday," she said solemnly. "And he's the kind of a chap who will be awfully stiff in letters. I might lose him entirely, Mom, if I can't make him want an understanding before he leaves. I just know he loves me, and any girl ought to be able to make a man propose if she *knows* he loves her."

"Well," I said, thinking hard, "how about telling him of somebody else? Why don't you pretend you've just received a letter from some boy upstate? You know, make believe you almost think you're in love with this other chap. And say that you were sure you were in love with him until a few days ago! He'll get that! Try it out, and see how it works."

So, the next night Cherry, in Babe's grey chiffon dinner dress, and Rita's Spanish shawl, went out to try my advice. But when she got home she was miserable. Miserable! Tracy had listened, and questioned very gravely, and taken the whole thing too seriously. He asked her if the other boy were well-to-do and Cherry had said, "Oh, yes, he's an electrical engineer, and comes from one of the best families in Rochester."

"And Mom," she mourned, "he just grew awfully silent and pensive. And he wasn't a bit like himself all the rest of the evening. I didn't know what to do. Because there *isn't* any other boy! And I couldn't very well tell him I had just been lying, could I?"

I frowned, looking at Cherry, perched there in her little dimity nightrobe on the end of her bed and hugging the footpost forlornly. And I thought it over for a moment. One thing I could see. If Roger Tracy didn't propose to Cherry before he went back West, she wouldn't get over it easily. She wasn't the kind of a girl to have a string of admirers; and I felt it my duty to help her with this one. So I considered a few moments carefully.

"What have you told him about us?" I asked her finally.

"Why, I said that you were good friends of mine that I was staying with in New York," she answered me slowly. "You see, I told him I came from Rochester. Rochester is such a nice place. I was there once when I was a kid. And I told him that Rita and Babe were on the stage, and that I had known them for years, and that I had gone to school with them. And I told him how good you all were to me, and what lovely times I had, and how happy I was to be with you. That part wasn't any lie, Mom. And I said that I hadn't known any one but you when I came to New York, but that

you folks knew a great many wonderful and famous people."

"Ummm!" I nodded my head slowly. "I think I'm beginning to see what's the matter here. Now Cherry, listen to me. You invite that boy up to dinner here tomorrow night. See?"

"Oh, Mom, you darling! I'd love to! I know he's been impressed by this building every time he saw me home. And I'd love for him to see this lovely apartment, I want you to meet him too. But I hated to ask you because you've done so much for me already. Will Rita and Babe be here?"

"No, they're both going out to dinner tomorrow night. There will just be you and Roger and myself."

Well, I didn't even tell Rita or Babe what I intended to do. But I had my mind all made up. And the next night I fixed the dinner carefully. I had the table set perfectly natural, delicious food and plenty of it, but no airs. As we haven't a servant, the girls always wait on the table themselves, relay fashion. I could see that Cherry was a little timorous about that, but she didn't dare say anything to me. I just smiled and waited.

The Tracy boy showed up in a tuxedo —and the moment I looked at it I knew it was hired! Yes, ma'am! You can't fool me. And he was about as used to it as I am to a diamond tiara. But my land! what a fine fellow he was! I liked him from the first smile he gave me. Eager, boyish, brawny, straight-from-the-shoulder. And he watched Cherry like an adoring puppy dog! She was all dressed up in Babe's navy blue taffeta, and had on Rita's crystal earrings, and new black satin slippers. She looked right sweet.

The dinner was a great success. Nobody is ever formal with me very long. And before the tomato soup with whipped cream was finished, the two of them were laughing and chatting with me as if I were their age. Cherry, I knew, had dreaded jumping up and changing the dishes and all that. But I could see that Roger was very impressed with the home atmosphere. And I got her out of the room just as often as I could on various pretenses, and questioned him as casually and coolly as you please. All the boys like me. All of Rita and Babe's beaus come to me and get me to fix up things for them. And Roger was no exception. Before dinner was over, I had him confiding in me. So I sent Cherry into the other room to make several phone calls for me—though she was very piqued at my high-handedness. And while she was gone Roger told me how much he loved her, and what a wonderful girl he thought she was.

"I'll never forget her, Mrs. Peters," he said quietly. "I've never met a girl like her before."

"She certainly is one fine little girl," I agreed beaming. "And I'm glad to hear you say such lovely things about her. You know I was very anxious to meet you, Roger, because she had talked so much of you. She seldom raves about people. But I don't ever remember her being so taken with a chap before. And I wanted to see what this wonder she was talking about was like."

He flushed. And his eyes held a sort of hurt look.

"Well, I'll never forget this trip to New York," he answered slowly. "It's been the nearest thing to a dream come true I've ever known. And it's wonderful of you to tell me what Cherry said, Mrs. Peters. I'll always remember that. I'm terribly in love with her. But—but I'm nobody, Mrs. Peters. A girl like Cherry, with all her fine clothes, and fine friends, and talents—well, she wouldn't think twice of a chap like me if she knew the truth!"

"The truth?" I urged.

"Well, I guess I've just pulled the dog," he admitted with a miserable grin. "I don't own any ranch, Mrs. Peters. But I'm the manager of a ranch for a man named Riordan, a millionaire, out in Colorado. I'm not badly off. But I'm no ranch owner. And I haven't any car at all. And I wasn't the black sheep of my family. I was the best of my family! My mother ran away and left me when I wasn't a year old. And my father died of d. t.'s when I was ten. I've been on my own pretty much since then. Bumming my way everywhere, and getting along the best I could."

Cherry came into the room before I could answer a single word. I made them turn on the radio, and they danced and some old friends of mine came in about nine o'clock, so I made Cherry and Roger go on out to the movies.

Well, when Cherry came home that night there was a dark flush on her cheeks. She rushed by me and into her room, hardly able to keep back the torrent of tears until she could close the door.

I could only wait a moment or so, and then I took a deep breath, and walked right into her room without even knocking. She stopped crying in a very few moments, and sat bolt upright, trembling all over.

"Mom, you have something to tell me!" she choked out her words. "What is it? Quick Mom. Please!"

So I calmed her down a bit, and I sat beside her on the bed, and told her everything that Roger had confided.

"So that's what he meant!" she cried, and her hands were clenched together and her eyes on fire. "That's what he meant! Mom, he said good-bye to me tonight. He told me he might not see me again before he left. He's going day after tomorrow instead of next Sunday. And he told me to ask you what he had told you tonight." He's afraid of me. Afraid of me, Mom! Afraid of my borrowed clothes, and my make-believe society! I've just been big washing and small hang-out, that's all! And I deserve to lose him!"

"YOU mean you want him now, anyway?" I asked, feeling pretty proud.

"Want him!" she flared. "Want him! I love him! And I'm going to find him, or else I'm going to take the next train right after him to Colorado! Oh Mom, Mom! I've been such a little fool. Mom, I'd scrub floors for Roger, I'd live in a pigsty with him. I'd even go back to Canan-duagua for him!"

And she dropped to her knees, and buried her face in my lap, and cried as if her heart would break.

Twenty minutes later Cherry was phoning the home of Miss Ryan, for Roger

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was staying with Miss Ryan's brother. But Roger hadn't come home yet. Cherry left a message for him to call, no matter what hour he came in. But not a tinkle came from that phone the whole night through.

The next morning she phoned again, and Miss Ryan told her that Roger had come in late, and had left early that morning. She told Cherry that Roger had packed his things, and intended to leave that day.

Poor Cherry! She was nearly distracted. She decided to stay home from work that day, in case she should get word from Roger. So I phoned the store to tell them she was ill. She had never missed a day before.

But bless my heart! Along about noon, Cherry received a big box of flowers! Yes, from Roger! With a sweet note saying that he hoped she would find it in her heart to understand, and realize how happy she had made his trip East. He said he would never, never forget her; adding that by the merest stroke of luck he was leaving on the Century that very day.

Cherry crushed the orchids and lilies of the valley to her despairingly. Then she began tearing things out of her closet, picking out her meanest dress and hat and coat.

"I'm going down to that train," she said. "And I'm going to drag him off it. I'm going to tell him, 'Roger, I'm a liar too! I come from poor trash up in Canduagua. I just rent a room from Mrs. Peters, and every glad rag I ever wore I borrowed from Rita and Babe. I'm not an interior decorator. I'm a salesgirl, and I had never been to a theater or a night club or to dinner with a man before I met you."

"Bully for you, child!" I said; and I was laughing through my tears.

OFF she bounded. And I found myself praying that she would catch him before the train went!

I didn't hear from her all afternoon or all that evening. I was worried sick, and not a little offended, too. But when she came back—about ten o'clock that night—she brought Roger with her. And the two of them, with their arms about each other, came right up to me, and kissed me.

"Mom!" said Cherry in a half whisper. "Look!"

She held up her left hand. And on it was a sweet, unpretentious little diamond engagement ring that Roger had bought for her that afternoon!

"Oh!" I gasped, beaming upon them.

"Roger is going to stay over until next Wednesday," said Cherry, as we walked into the living room. "I'm glad the girls aren't home yet. I wanted to tell you first. I'm going to give up my job, and buy my trousseau with the money that is due me this week. Mom, will you help me buy my trousseau? It has to be very simple. Rough it clothes, ranch things, you know."

"We're going to be married on Tuesday night, Mrs. Peters," put in Roger. "At the Little Church Around The Corner. And we want to know if you will stand up with us."

"Will I?" I answered proudly. "And so will the girls, too. And I hope one of these days we'll all be visiting Mr. and Mrs. Tracy out in Colorado."

"Won't it be wonderful?" laughed Cherry excitedly. "But Mom, you haven't heard everything yet. Do you know what we're going to do? Roger has wired his bank for some money he has saved. He has a thousand dollars saved up altogether. Isn't that wonderful? And he's going to buy a Ford here, and teach me how to drive. And right after we're married, we're going to drive all the way out to Colorado. And that is to be our honeymoon!"

"Sake's alive!" I gasped. "How I wish you needed a chaperon on that trip!"

Cherry giggled, nestling closer to Roger.

"And tonight we telephoned Mr. Riordan long distance, and Roger told him he was bringing home a wife. And I spoke to Mr. Riordan, too, and he was awfully nice. He said that he and his wife would fix up the cottage for us."

Well, long and late we talked, and Roger didn't leave till just before the girls came in.

I never heard anything to equal the fuss Rita and Babe made over that ring! You'd think it was a piece of the moon! And Rita and Babe and I decided to chip in, and buy Cherry a complete camping outfit for her wedding present.

Well, last night we all went down to their wedding at the Little Church Around the Corner. I cried at that wedding just as much as I did at Mary's. It seemed as if it were my own little girl getting married. And then we kissed them good-bye, and they got into the brand new Ford sedan, and were off! Shall I ever forget that last glimpse of Cherry, sitting beside the proud and grinning Roger? She looked so trig and happy in her little tweed suit, with the blue four-in-hand tie at the neck of her white silk blouse, and the tight little felt hat that just matched her hair? And in the back seat sat her cat!

Well, Rita and Babe and I dined at a restaurant nearby afterwards. But we were so touched we could hardly eat at all. We were thinking all the time of those two out on the road together.

And I said: "Many's the time you hear of a girl coming to the big city, but you seldom hear about the girls that go back to the country again."

And Babe said: "She's happy for the first time in her life!"

And Rita said: "She'll never be lonely again."

And I added: "God bless her."

And then Rita said: "Well, we don't have to get slobby about it. Babe and I had better beat it to the theater, or we'll be late for our show!"

And Babe said: "Can I bring Alice along home tonight?"

And I said: "Oh yes, dear. Of course!"

So I kissed them good-bye, and went along home to freshen and clean up Cherry's room, and get it ready for Alice, who is coming to stay with us. And all the time I was working around I sort of dreaded another person's taking Cherry's place.

But Alice is a nice enough girl.

I just guess mothers are born sentimental!

excitement?" I queries not getting the idea.

"Are you supposed to ask or what?" she wants to know.

"Being deaf and dumb on the etiquette of the game, old girl, I'd say if you don't know keep mum. Wait for some one else to make the wise crack. Why worry anyway?"

"But you don't understand," she urges, "bridge can run into a pile of money if your stakes are high."

"Then go in and clean up, sis. Guess there's enough in the bank to make good in case we've got to go to the ink. But from what I've heard of your card sense you can trot with the best of them."

As soon as I decently can I trails to the billiard room. The kids don't see me for a minute as I stand just inside the door. That Kathaleen is sure some shot. Her last one's a bank and she only misses it by a hair.

"Hard luck, Miss Kathaleen."

"Oh, there you are," she smiles. "Here, take a cue, so if any one comes in we can stall by pretending to play."

"Fine," says I. "Your break. Shoot the fifteen ball and the big secret."

"It's like this," she tells me, keeping her voice low, "Tommy, you see, is manager of the Midhaven Bank—that is, in the summer time."

"This town big enough to have a regular bank?" I asks.

"No," chuckles Tom. "That's just it. The bank is one of Dad and Uncle Harry's playthings."

"Uncle Harry is Harrington Ordway," Kathaleen explains.

"I see."

"They founded the bank more as a joke, and an accommodation for the summer colony. But the biggest joke is that the townspeople took it so darn seriously that the building, which seemed much too sumptuous, now has all it can do to handle the business."

"Yes," chimes Kathaleen proudly, "and Tommy manages it so well that our stock—we all own shares—pays ten per cent."

"Oh, shucks," blushes Tom, "any one could do what I do. I just keep an eye on it during July and August. Gives me an excuse for not having to run to town."

"What's this got to do with the movies?" I interrogates, liking the boy all the better for his modesty.

"Everything, Mr. Howard. Tommy won't admit it, but with his usual business acumen he got the Mogul-Majestic people to open an account with us. They have a big pay-roll every week and their account is quite worth having."

"The great secret," Tom chimes in, "is that in the picture they're doing now there is to be a big bank robbery scene. The general manager, Oldham, told me about it one day. They were getting ready to build a set for it when I suggested they use our bank some Saturday. He was tickled to death with the idea."

"I should think he would be."

"And," gurgles Kathaleen, "tomorrow's the day of the big stunt."

"Oh ho!" I nods. "You're pulling this on the sly, I take it, without consulting the board of directors."

"The majority of the board," Tom smiles, "is sitting in executive session this minute at the bridge table. Dad I don't mind, so much. He'd get mad and blow off steam. Uncle Harry would express legal disapproval and then want a front row seat. But dad's partner, Beaver Brown, is the tough egg."

"Yeh," I agrees, "I've played golf with him."

"Then you know," groans Tom, "that his bump of humor isn't more than a dimple."

"Still," Kathaleen puckers her brow, "when you come to think of it, acting in the movies is hardly a dignified thing for a bank to do."

"That's why," Tom turns to me, "we want your support. Sort of moral backing. Dad and Beaver are nuts about you. The governor because he likes you, Beaver because you lick him at golf."

"Shall I have a parlay with them sometime tonight and kinda break the news gently, maybe?"

"Oh, no, no," gasps Kathaleen hurriedly. "That would never do at all. They'll know it soon enough."

"Gee, there'll be a mob to watch, I bet," Tommy enthuses. "I only hope the directors don't get wise till it's over."

"Then all you count on my doing is to sort of act as shock-absorber?"

"That's it," grins the boy. "You just horn in and say it's all right, the director's a friend of yours, and—well, you know—laugh it off for us."

He's such a nice kid I can't help fall in with his ideas.

"All right," I assures him. "If I can help you any, count on me."

"Thanks, I just knew we could." He shakes my hand. "Say, Kit, how about a little spin in the car, eh? We can show Mr. Howard the bank?"

"Great!" exclaims Kathaleen. "Come on. I'll just leave word we've gone out for an hour."

These kids are just a coupla wild fidgets. Their enthusiasm is catching. So the three of us piles into a big silver racing car, laughing our heads off at the lark. Say, that's some tire burner. All nickel and silver. Power? She's just a mad engine on four wheels.

KATHALEEN drives. And while I've seen a lot of guys spin the old steering handle, this baby doll don't have to say excuse me to any of them. She sure knows that bus and how to make it say mama and papa. It's a glorious night, with gold dollar stars stuck in a purple sky. The wind's fanning our faces and I'm pretty happy, forgetting all about the show business and the new edition of "Girls and Giggles."

"Speed traps don't seem to worry you none, Miss Kathaleen," I grins, as we shoot over a hill on high.

"Only two cops in the place," she laughs, "and we own them. Pop blew them to fancy uniforms and motor-cycles, and they'd let me commit murder without tooting a horn."

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"I'll bet they're the tourists' terror to strangers though."

"Wait a minute," she puts on the brakes, as we round a corner, "I'll introduce you to half the local constabulary."

Sure enough, in the shadow of some trees by the roadside is a motor-cycle. Its owner grins as we draw up to his parking place.

"Good evening, Walter," Kathleen salutes. "Watching for the wayward speedster, eh?"

"Just about thinking of turning in, miss," says Walter. "I'm expecting a hard day tomorrow."

"How's that?"

"Oh, Saturdays is always extra busy, you know, miss. And with this here rumor that's got about of the moving picture they're going to take, why, I guess there'll be a jam."

"So the news is out, eh?" chirps Tommy.

"Oh, sure," Walter nods. "Say, you don't happen to know just when they'll pull it off, do you?"

"Not exactly, but they said about lunch time," Tommy answers. "If there is a big push, see they don't crowd into the picture and spoil things."

"Bet I will," the cop wags his head proudly. "Me and my partner Jerry will keep them in line."

"Fine," smiles Kathaleen, "I'm certain you're able to handle any situation."

"We does our best," he murmurs, self-conscious like. Then, after a second's pause and clearing his throat, "I wonder if you'd mind, ma'am, if I says something."

"Certainly not. What is it, Walter?"

"It's about that brick road out of Main Street. There's hardly room for two cars to pass unless they're very careful."

"And I go shooting by on high most of the time. Is that it?"

"Oh, it'll be all right when the road's finished, but just now—"

"You'd prefer to have me more cautious, eh?"

"Well, it's just that I'd hate to see anything happen to you, ma'am."

"All right, Walter, I'll watch my step."

"Thank you, Miss Kathaleen."

"Good night, Walter." And she steps on the starter.

"This," says she, turning a corner, "is the road he is so worried about."

"It ain't none too roomy," I observes.

"They're widening it," she nods, indicating a pile of brick at one side. "Only, like all municipal improvements, time doesn't seem to be part of the contract."

"That's the bank," says Tommy, as we pull up at a fine-looking gray stone affair. "Looks more like a mausoleum, doesn't it?"

"It'll screen great," I tells him, admiring the wide stone steps and the magnificent iron grille doors. "It's a moving picture bank for sure."

Tommy laughs. "Don't let the governor hear you call it that if you want to stay on his visiting list."

"There's nothing else to the village, but this square," Kathaleen waves her hand. "Half a dozen shops and the railroad station."

"Now that I've seen the big city," I grins, "where do we go from here?"

"Back to the bungalow, before we're missed," warns Tommy. "Home, James, and don't spare the spark-plugs."

The card games are just breaking up but we get in without any one noticing we been gone. Tillie Ann comes traipsing up wild-eyed, edging me to a corner.

"Hank, what do you think happened?"

"You held a ace full, I suppose, and made a killing."

"No," breathes my income burner, "this was bridge. When we started some one said we'd play for a quarter. Of course I took that to mean a quarter of a cent a point."

"That ain't much, is it?" I asks.

"No, of course not. But when we settled, they figured it out at twenty-five cents a point."

"Whew!" I lets out a whistle. "Tell me the sad news. Are we sunk for the whole bankroll?"

"The point is," she gulps, "I won . . . Look!" And she shows me a check for three hundred thirty dollars. "What do you think of that?"

"I think it's too bad you stopped so soon," I tells her. "Find out if there's any more games they think they're good at."

"Oh, Hank," she tosses her head, "you're an incorrigible."

And that ends the hostilities for the moment.

It sure is some good bed. So good that it seems but a minute when Elder pussyfoots in with frapéed orange juice, coffee, and toast.

"You're driving your own car to the club, sir?" asks Elder.

"Yes, why?"

"Nothing, sir. Only the other three gentlemen are going in the limousine, and the chauffeur thought if you'd changed your mind there's plenty of room."

"No, I'd rather drive over."

"Thank you, sir. The easiest way is to go through the village, turn at the bank and follow the brick road straight."

"Fine," I nods; "I know where that is."

It's a whiz of a spin in the early morning, and I'm tickled I stuck to my original idea of jocking my own buzz wagon. They're waiting for me as I pull up.

ORDWAY'S my partner and he's some load. Not only that but old Beaver Brown must of been sitting up nights in bed practicing wrist wriggles. Anyway, we get licked. Which just about tickles Charley Joslyn to death. Crow? He chortles.

"Just because you're lucky once in your life," I tells him, "don't get cocky. If we hadn't promised to be home for lunch I'd tote you guys out right now."

"Oh, ho!" he chuckles. "Four up and three to go! Let's see, you owe us——"

"Oh, go to the dickens!" I pretends I'm mad. Which only gets more chuckles from Charley.

"Just to show my sweet disposition," he rubs it in, "I'm going to see what it feels like to ride home with a loser." And he climbs into my car. "You two old guys," he tosses to Beaver and Harrington, "better go through the woods. The sun might fatigue you." Beating me on the links sure gives Charley a thrill.

Hunched down behind the wind-shield, he's puffing one of his big black cigars.

I'm all eyes on the road as we breeze along. Nearing the village I notices a crowd, so I swings wide. Charley straightens in his seat, and I slow up. "What the——" he starts. For there's a flock of cars parked all around the square and a mob of maybe three hundred people in front of the bank. They're pushing and craning their necks, while Walter in his musical comedy uniform proudly waves them back.

Standing in a car at the curb is a guy in a cap, churning for dear life at a moving picture camera. Next to this is a big black touring car with the engine running, out of which has sprung two bandits with drawn pistols, who make a dash for the bank. "The devil," shouts Charley, hardly waiting for me to put on the brakes. "I'll stop this." And he's out of the car and running for the bank.

It's such a good show I'm hoping he don't spoil the fun.

Just then an old fellow with a black bag comes out of the bank and the robbers hold him up in true movie style. He registers surprise, takes a step backward, but one of them shoves a gun into his ribs. He drops the bag and holds up his hands. Charley ain't broke through yet, and the crowd cheers. One of the hold-up men grabs the bag and hustles for the curb, the other pretending to hold back the crowd with his gun. The fellow they're supposed to rob makes a dive for him, and there's a short struggle, the bandit laying him out cold with the butt of his gun. More cheers. It's great stuff. I'm standing up in the car. And I don't mind admitting I'm getting quite a kick. I looks over at Charley. He's worried his way through to the front row just as the stick-up men beat it for the black touring car. He's going to bust right in, but hawk-eyed Walter is on the job and blocks him.

Charley shouts, "Let me by, you idiot," when Tommy, who is right on the side lines, grabs his arm.

"It's all right, dad," I hear him say. But Charley shouts, madder than a wet hen.

"All right nothing. Do you think I'm going to let them use my bank for——"

The rest is lost in shouts and cheers from the crowd. I looks over at the guy on the steps. His hat's rolled off and he's laying on his back. "Make a great picture," says I to myself. The light is perfect. Looking down again I happen to glance at my watch. It's just twelve. They're pulling this stunt right on schedule. I looks to see what Charley's doing. He's still protesting and frothing at the mouth. Tommy and Walter are having a tough time with him.

Finally, shoving them aside, Charley heads for the steps.

"Gosh," I mutters half aloud, "he'll get took in the picture."

At the same minute it comes over me what I ain't noticed before, that this bank messenger don't seem to have no make-up on. That's funny, with the heavy light of the noon sun pouring down. I looks for the camera man. He's disappeared. Him and his machine vanished like the earth swallowed them. Quick I turns to the black touring car. It's under way and speeding for the brick road. That's when I gets my hunch. It comes over me all of a sudden I ain't seen my friend Conrad, the director, anywheres around.

"Hell," says I to myself, "this ain't no movie stunt——this is the real thing!" I steps on the starter and shouts, "Stop thief!"

It all happens so quick there's no time to think. There goes the black car and I'm after them. In a minute we're free of the crowd and swinging down the brick road. Mechanically I reaches in the door pocket for the gun I has there ever since I've been driving nights. Putting on all the speed I can, I holds the wheel with one hand and takes a shot at them. They don't bother to even look around. Their car's a twin-six, and they've got a flying start. I tries another pot shot, but it goes as wild as the other. My throttle's wide open and doing fifty-five.

Then suddenly I sees something that turns my blood cold.

FAR up the road, its nickel and silver body flashing in the sunlight, comes a speed automobile full tilt, driven as only Kathaleen can drive it. I can see her hair blowing in the breeze. And if I wasn't going so fast myself I'd close my eyes at what's going to happen. Laughing, daredevil, happy Kathaleen coming to see the fun and never dreaming of danger. Joy-riding down that narrow road, she is, with three desperate devils in their black touring car headed straight for her. I've just sense enough left to try to warn her. Quick I fires every shot in my automatic, praying she'll get the signal. And she does. In a second her body goes tense as she bends over the wheel. I half expects to see her try to turn her car around. But I knows at the same time that's impossible. What will she do? I grit my teeth and hold my breath. What happens is the greatest display of nerve I ever seen. Just before the black car, horn screeching, reaches her, she slams on the brakes, pulls her car across so it blocks the road, stops it, and leaps out to one side.

The next instant there's a crash as the big black bus hits the silver beauty amidships and a flock of bandits go flying into the brick-pile.

In a minute I'm there, my arms around Kathaleen, who's crying by the roadside. Then comes the crowd.

The hold-up men? No, they wasn't killed. Escaped by some miracle, so Walter could have the honor of the arrest. They almost got away with the Mogul-Majestic weekly pay-roll.

And me? For some reason they makes me a hero. Though I claims if any one deserves credit, it's Kathaleen.

But you know what reporters are. Hank Howard, the hero, listens good in a three column head hooked up with flossy pictures of pretty dames in the new "Girls and Giggles" revue.

I meets Lou Frazer a coupla days later on Broadway.

"You're some press agent, kid," is his greeting. "Staging a bank hold-up is sure a new stunt. My hat's off to you!"

Ain't that just like the whitelight weisenheimers? There's a lot of them believes some guy salts the ocean.

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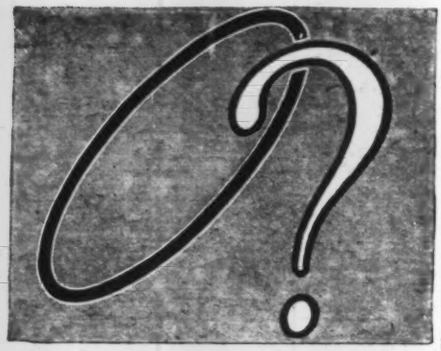

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Not Worth Murder

—continued from page 55

quick mind darted ahead, and he pictured Daverdana, white and beautiful like a tragic muse, forever faithful to his memory. He no longer looked astonished. His mind was charged with the flattering image of Daverdana immolating herself upon his funeral pyre. She was such a strange woman; perhaps this was the answer to the mystery.

Was she capable of loving only what was lost beyond redemption? He asked her.

"It would be new," she replied. "Who can tell? Perhaps I could love a man who died for me."

He lifted her fingers to his lips. His lips were cold and dry.

"You are not afraid, Miles?" she asked.

He straightened.

"Of nothing on earth, if your love is the reward."

Then he, too, had gone.

Daverdana put her hand over her eyes, and took it away wet. She was crying for her own heart, for the love that was still unborn . . .

CABOT'S flat was in East Fifty-first Street.

There was a fire in the grate, and an arm chair drawn up near the fire. Nils Eriksen sat in the arm chair, listening.

His face was paper white, and his eyes, usually clear and cold, burned like those of a man on the rack. He had been drinking heavily during the two hours since he had left Daverdana. But once he was inside of Cabot's rooms, he sat motionless, listening.

A door opened at last. Nils got up, and his shadow, long, thin and black in the lamp light, leapt across the ceiling like a live thing. Miles Cabot came in.

"Well," he said, taking off his gloves, "this is a new time to pay calls. Still, you know you're always welcome, Nils."

He talked calmly, but his heart was pounding in his throat. He was in mortal terror.

"I won't keep you long, Miles."

"Oh . . . What can I do for you?"

Nils laughed, shortly, somewhat drunkenly:

"Cabot, I've got a little surprise for you. I'm going to kill you. Defend yourself if you like."

"Courteous as ever," returned Cabot mockingly, biting hard on his underlip. "And may I ask—to what I owe this pleasure?"

"To Daverdana, my good friend. Two of us are too many. I think she will take the survivor."

Cabot knew that his dream could be realized. He had only to bare his breast, to make a brave scene for a moment or two, and he would be victorious. But vanity was strongest. He sneered——

"You are a conceited fool like all big men."

Eriksen's hand tightened on the cold thing in his pocket. "You mean?"

"I mean what I say. Do you think you will win her love by killing me? Well, Nils, my parting word is this: if you escape the electric chair, which is doubtful, she may feel in duty bound to marry you and so her body will become yours. But the cream of the jest to me, Nils, is that when she lies in your arms—in the arms of the conqueror—she will be thinking of me, the victim, who unresistingly laid down his life for her."

Now Nils did not clearly understand the words of the other, but Miles' laughter, as over a rare and secret fancy, disturbed him greatly.

"At any rate we are both loyal," said Cabot. "We both obey Daverdana to the end. Shall we drink a toast to her before . . ."

"Yes," assented Eriksen.

Cabot brought out a decanter and filled two tumblers. The men lifted their drinks, the rims touched. Cabot's hand was steady; and Eriksen, whose hand was shaking, saw it—suddenly flung back his head, and set down his glass without touching it to his lips. He cried: "No, my God, no." He swung toward the door.

Cabot barred his way, taunting: "You have no courage . . . no sense of harmony . . . the beauty of sacrifice . . ."

"Get out of my way," Nils cried out. He flung Cabot roughly against the wall. He slammed the outer door and rushed down the single flight of stairs. He was in the street.

It was cold and moist. The sky hung low between the steep house fronts.

Nils Eriksen staggered along the street, keeping close to the wall. The policeman on the corner greeted him cheerily; many a time the two had exchanged matches. But tonight Nils looked at the officer with hunted eyes, thinking: "He does not know I might have been a murderer."

HE CAME to lights. It was Broadway. People passed. Women smiled at him. Each time Nils thought: "She doesn't know I might have been a murderer. She doesn't know I might have killed a man."

He felt a burning urge for more drink. He went into a speak-easy and sat at a table, alone. He ordered whiskey, more whiskey. The image of Daverdana sat tranquilly beside him, smiling. He ordered more whiskey.

Now a dark, painted girl, with deep rings under her eyes, came and sat down on Daverdana's image beside him. A street woman.

"Stand me a drink, kid," she wheedled.

He ordered more whiskey.

She leaned over, laying her hand on his knee. Her thick perfume was in his nostrils.

Suddenly: "I might have been a murderer," he cried fiercely, "I nearly killed a man tonight . . ."

A shower of giggles answered him. "Whatsa matter kid? Did you get cold feet?"

He put his hand in his pocket and drew out some loose silver and an automatic. He threw them on the table and went out.

Outside the sky had grown lighter; the houses seemed to have drawn apart. Nils flung back his head as the wind ruffled his hair.

All at once he was light-hearted. He was free.

DAVERDANA was waking up. Aunt Charity had drawn up the looped silk curtains. A shower of sunshine spattered the room. It glittered dazzlingly on the window-sill, where there was a crust of snow. It bathed Aunt Charity and her modest morning gown. It fell in a pool on the carpet.

Daverdana lifted her face out of a desert of small, white cushions, and said sleepily: "What time is it?" And then before Aunt Charity could answer, "Oh, it doesn't matter. It's been snowing."

She sat and clasped her hands with delight. She was a child in the morning. She woke up with her face pink, her hair in tangled curls. Her eyes were almost closed with drowsiness. Only a hair-line of light showed between the silky lashes.

"Ooo . . . mm . . . flowers, Aunt Charity!" she cried, flinging back the covers and leaping upon a large lavender box.

By the time she reached the box she was awake. She had become demure again. She took the box primly to the bed and began untying elaborate bows.

Aunt Helen and Aunt Grace came sliding in with secretive morning smiles.

"A letter has come by special messenger, Daverdana," said Aunt Helen portentously. "I'll leave it."

The three aunts retired noiselessly.

Daverdana lifted the lid off the box.

White orchids, sprays and sprays of them. And a card from Miles Cabot, which read: "I would gladly have died for you, perfect one. It was not I who lost courage."

Daverdana sighed and leaned back, listlessly. The box fell off the bed and the white orchids were spread on the carpet in an attractive, careless pattern. Daverdana picked up the letter, turned it over, looked at the great red seal on the back, and put it down again. Daverdana rang for her chocolate.

When the maid had brought the tray, and arranged the sprays of orchids in a blue and white Wedgwood bowl, Daverdana lay back in the soft cushions and languidly tore open the letter.

A large sheet of heavy paper unfolded in her hands. She read:

> I do not believe any woman is worth a murder. I see you now as a pretty, vicious doll, stuffed with sawdust.

Nils Eriksen had signed it with his huge, illegible scrawl.

A delicate smile curved the corners of Daverdana's mouth. She looked from the letter to the orchids, from the orchids to the letter. She nibbled the smallest finger of her left hand. She wriggled her toes. She closed her eyes and tried to think. And at last she said to the maid: "If Mr. Cabot calls I am out. If Mr. Eriksen calls . . . let me know. I may be at home."

She lay back on the bed, neglecting her chocolate. Her whole body was filled with a languid, delicious ache. She did not dare to think. She watched the snow, melted from the radiator's heat, dripping off the window-sill. And she waited, without quite knowing what for.

All during the day Daverdana waited, deliciously aware of her body. She watched the sun flow over the carpet like a mellow wine, and thought: "The sun is alive." She looked at her image in the triple mirror; she laid her finger on the delicate blue tracery of a vein on her neck and seemed to feel the blood flowing in there, a rich, warm stream. She thought: "I am alive." She polished her nails until they glittered like small pink shells. She looked at her face in the mirrors of her nails, and her heart sang a paean of thanksgiving for her own beauty. She wanted to pour out her beauty as the sun poured out its beauty on the earth; she wanted not only to live but to create life and beauty.

At two o'clock Cabot called. Daverdana had left orders; he was told that she was not at home. But his visit threw a shadow on the day. The sun had withdrawn from her carpet, the room was bathed in a tenebrous dusk. Daverdana clasped her hands tightly, and sat, as Daverdana could, idle and motionless—waiting, fearing the sound of the bell. But there was no peal to shatter her tranquillity. Six o'clock came. The room was black. Jade-colored reflections slid over the ceiling. Outside of the window a bell chimed.

Daverdana jumped up, switched on lights, rang for her maid, ordered the carriage, stuffed her hair under a close hat of amethyst velvet. Wrapped in her sable cloak she ran downstairs, three steps at a time. The cat aunts scurried after her, questioning, anxious. Her eyes burned them. She cried: "I'm going out. I may not be back for dinner. Don't wait."

The door was opened for her. In a gust of cold wind Daverdana disappeared, and the house seemed to fade as though all the lights had suddenly been dimmed.

The two chestnut horses, winded, pulled up at a house west of Macdougal Street. The footman opened the door. Daverdana slid forth like a shadow, her sable wrap brushing against some dirty urchins who were gaping at her. She was blind to her surroundings. She thumped the crooked brass knocker. She flashed a smile at the swarthy woman who opened the door. She asked for Nils Eriksen; she would wait or come up, it didn't matter.

The swarthy woman shook her head. "Mist' Eriksen gone away. This morning."

"Away? Away where?"

"Away to mountains. He got camp there."

"Have you the address?"

Presently Daverdana, clutching a smudged paper in her white-gloved hand, stood on the doorstep, taking deep breaths as though she intended to absorb the whole night—sound, smell, sight, sensation, acrid winter taste—into her being. She flung a shower of change at the urchins, and climbed into the carriage while they scrambled on the pavement. She sank back in the seat, smothered with joy, with delicious terror, with resolution. Life seemed to be beating with soft, heavy wings against her eyelids.

She was in love.

THE train jerked and stopped, jerked and stopped. The green plush seats smelled of tobacco and of heat. When

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the conductor opened the glass door winter came marching through the car like an invisible army. The conductor shouted the name of a station, banging the door.

Daverdana picked up her suitcase and staggered down the long aisle of green plush. The wooden platform, encrusted with frost, cracked under her high heels. She filled her lungs with mountain air. She was alone, alone in the midst of a wild desolation, a country of blue peaks melting into blue sky. And somewhere in that wilderness there was Nils Eriksen. Nils who had broken the glass casket of his submission; who had given her her heart, new born, tender, palpitant.

She made inquiries of the solitary man in the boxlike station. And as he looked in amazement at her soft black cloth suit, her tiny hands enclosed in black suède, her thin ankles in black silk and her pointed black suède heels, he answered her questions. Yes, he knew Mr. Eriksen's camp. Up Mount Martha. Yes, he could get Willem Van Donck's Ford to take her up that far. But the last mile she'd have to walk the trail. Clean up grade. Mr. Eriksen's cabin was clear at the top.

DRIVING through the valley, beating her palms together for warmth, Daverdana drank in the wild ruggedness of the country. The air was full of sound; the voice of nature thundered and roared without disturbing the immense calm that reigned above. Here and there torrents of water, twinkling in the sunshine, leaped like animals out of the sides of the mountains, bent themselves in the curves of plunging nereids, fell into deep basins that gurgled with water and rippled off placidly into the valley.

The city with its thousand insect noises, its thin, emasculated spires of sky-scrapers, seemed a dream behind her; the bedroom with its walls of satin, the bowl of scented crystals—the silent aunts—seemed paltry, puerile, before this moving pageant of the earth.

The valley lay behind them now. The Ford jolted up-hill along a narrow road bordered with rocks and twisted, stunted evergreens. Quite abruptly the road finished in a flat dirt oval. The Ford halted, sneezed, slept. Mr. Van Donck showed Daverdana the trail which would take her directly to Mr. Eriksen's cabin. He would lead the way with her bag.

Daverdana thanked him, paid him, took the bag herself. She wanted to be alone. She wanted to come to Nils alone, there on the solitary crest of this mountain, in the grandeur of high noon.

She started merrily up the incline, scarcely feeling the weight of the traveling case, treading lightly the russet needles carpeting the trail. Presently, however, the forest thinned. The sun beat down on her in a rain of fire. Her wrists and arms began to ache intolerably, her ankles were pricked with sharp pangs, her head swam. The trail struck a short level space, open to the elements. From there she could see the valley spreading below, the waterfalls rainbow-tinted with distance, the road unwinding like a golden cord.

She turned away, the wind lashing her skirts to her legs, feeling fever in her cheeks.

Ahead the trail grew steep. There were no more pine needles to carpet her way. Rocks, pale with frost and dead lichen, strewed the path. Desperately Daverdana picked up her bag, started upward again.

Now, though her hands were numb with cold, drops of water stood on her forehead. She could feel her thin blouse clinging about her like a wet shroud. Needles of agony ran from her heels up into her legs. Her breath came in hard gasps that tore her breast. She stumbled, fell, bruising her leg, scraping the skin from her cheek. She could not move. She lay there, face down, feeling the wind sweep over her, feeling a horrible cold come out of the cruel, harsh earth, binding her down to it.

It seemed hours before she could raise herself to a sitting posture. Her whole body was a cage imprisoning horrible tortures—a cage that was like a fortress, from which no single ounce of agony could escape. She looked behind her, and the steep descent filled her with terror and despair.

Then she looked ahead. And there, above, at the end of the steep and rocky ascent, she could see the cabin—a brown thing lighted by the sun. She could see it clearly, not a quarter of a mile away. She could see the smoke rising from the chimney like an ostrich plume against the blue sky. And even while she watched a form appeared at the door; a man in a white shirt with his arms outstretched as if toward nature herself, so that his body formed a cross in the doorway.

Daverdana struggled to her feet. She was fainting . . . Her torture was too great. But she would go on, though the agony bound her ankles like iron knots, though her back was flailed with pain. It was as though her heart had turned liquid inside of her. Tears filled her eyes and hung there. She felt herself smiling.

It was good—all this was good. She was filled with ecstasy. She had been heartless and a fool; now she was expiating her sin against love. She went on, up and up, her heart singing. She went up and up, flaunting her pain like a medal of valor.

And quite suddenly, staggering through a clump of underbrush, she came face to face with the cabin. With a cry of triumph she sank to her knees, extending her hands to Nils Eriksen who stood above her.

"WHAT are you doing here?" There was no pleasure in that voice. No sympathy.

"I came to you. I came after you, Nils." Daverdana's eyes adored him. "You love me—and I came."

"You are mistaken. I don't love you," said Nils Eriksen, moving from the doorway and walking toward her. "Don't lie there, you looked absurd."

Daverdana wanted to cry, to protest that she couldn't, but his voice frightened her. She pulled herself up and stood clinging to a tree, stammering, "I came to you. I came. I came."

"You can go again," said Eriksen. And he went on, with a sort of contemptuous astonishment, "I wouldn't have believed in such overwhelming vanity. It wasn't

enough that you asked me to kill for you—you, a heartless image to the gods of destruction. But you had to follow me . . . you couldn't bear to lose a single one of your thousand suitors. Go back to Miles who would die for you. Back to little enameled rooms where you belong. Here you are absurd."

Daverdana shrank from his words. She clung to the tree, exclaiming in a fainting voice:

"I came because I love you. I don't want to go. I want to stay and serve you."

"Love and service!" Eriksen's voice was harsh. The color deepened on his thin cheeks. "Love and service—cupids painted on the walls of a pretty boudoir. Rose petals on a satin spread. Perfume in your red hair. That's your love. And service—a lover to lay his heart on the carpet, to make it softer for your feet. A husband to make his body a stepping stone so that your vanity may rear its head into the skies. Go home, Daverdana. Go back where you belong. The mountains are laughing at you."

Daverdana closed her eyes.

"I belong here . . . here where my heart is. I'll show you. I'll work for you. I'll scrub your floors and cook your meals. But I'll stay, Nils, I'll stay."

"The mountains won't stand laziness, Daverdana," Nils answered grimly. "You can't be my guest, Daverdana. Go home, little wax image! You will melt in the mountain sun."

"I love you. I'll stay," Daverdana said. She looked down at her bag.

"I won't kill for you; I won't carry for you," said Eriksen brutally. "I don't want you."

Daverdana picked up her bag. She walked toward the cabin, swaying a little. Eriksen watched her without moving.

His mouth was unrelenting, but in his clear eyes there was a reviving spark of fire, which was hope.

AT NOON the next day Daverdana removed the two large safety pins that had hitched up her black cloth skirt as she worked, and sank wearily on the doorstep.

The mountains gleamed in the sun. The wind was warmer, laden with the promise of spring. Daverdana rested her head against the wooden sash, and closed her eyes, listening. Behind the house Nils was chopping wood. With every blow her heart throbbed. Each sound was a sweet, an almost unendurable pang. She loved him so. She wanted to work and work, to steep herself in this exhaustion to prove to him her love. Since she had come they had scarcely spoken. She had ridden her weariness like a steed, driven it back like an enemy. She had made dinner, she had washed greasy dishes with a song on her lips, because he had eaten food prepared by her own sore hands.

The evening, too, had passed in silence. He had sat before the open fire, reading, never looking at her. And then he had gotten up, pointed to a bare cot against the wall. He had brought a bundle of blankets and thrown them on it. And without more than a curt good night he had left her.

But Daverdana had never slept as she slept that night. When she woke up, aching and stiff in every limb, she was happy. When she looked in her tiny mirror, and saw the cut on her cheek surrounded by a thick blue bruise, she was happy. Aching, she went about her work of preparing breakfast, and was happy. Even now, as she listened to the sound of Nils chopping wood, she was entirely happy.

The chopping ceased. Nils turned the corner of the house, his fair hair shining, his arms full of logs. Daverdana hurried to take some of them from him, to share the burden. In silence he allowed her to fill her arms. She was turning into the cabin when there was a shout from the trail.

Panting, mopping his face with a fine linen handkerchief, Miles Cabot came toward them.

"Well——" he said with a bitter glance at Eriksen. And again: "Well." Then to Daverdana: "For heaven's sake drop those logs. You'll kill yourself."

"I'll take them in," said Daverdana.

"Your poor face . . . my God, Daverdana, has he hurt you?" She shrank from the shock in Cabot's eyes. "I came the moment I got your message."

"My message?" she stammered. The wood was too heavy for her. She dropped it as Cabot approached her and took her poor hands. "Red . . . the precious little shells broken. Oh, my dear, my dear, I wouldn't know you."

Daverdana saw that Cabot was startlingly white; and again fleetingly he had the look of a startled rabbit. His expression showed his recoil from ugliness, from a Daverdana no longer aesthetically perfect.

He stared at the bruised cheek as though fascinated. Under his eyes she could feel the wild disorder of her hair, feel her skin moist and not quite immaculate, feel her whole nature thrown out of its normal balance by the emotional earthquake that had arisen. She withdrew her hands and put them behind her. She sensed his relief.

"Daverdana's been trying her hand at housework for a while." That was Eriksen's voice, hard, mocking. "But not for long. She knew you'd come and get her."

Cabot would not look at Eriksen. He stood facing Daverdana, and she kept her hands behind her, and shaking her tangled red hair, stepped back.

"I'll take you away, Daverdana. I'll take you where you can forget all this ugliness, this crudeness. I have a motor waiting at the bottom of the hill, soft-cushioned, where you can lie back and rest. I have rugs to wrap your poor body, dear. And when we get away from this forsaken wilderness I'll bathe your poor hands in rose-water until they are soft and white. I'll comb your hair with a little silver comb, and we'll lay you first in a bath all full of warm water and scent, and then on a bed as soft as clouds, my dear." He held out his hand. "Come, Daverdana."

Her eyes had widened. Fixed, fascinated, she stared at him. In the weariness of her body his words flowed like balm. Rose-water . . . scent . . . soft cushions. It was a world beckoning, not a man. The world of smoothness, of polish, of civilization.

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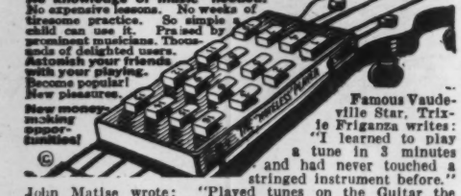

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THE earth rocked about Daverdana. She became aware of the crude mountains, the rocks scattered helter skelter by some fury of dead centuries, the trees gnarled and tortured. The chaos of earth and wind and water, of steep precipices and high cloud banks. At that moment the sun burst in a terrific whirling of white heat out of the mists, showering them with brilliance. Daverdana took a faltering step toward Cabot, her hands outstretched.

Then Eriksen said:

"Wait here, I'll pack your bag."

In the sunlight Daverdana turned to him like a savage thing, her soft eyes glittering.

"You won't! You won't! You won't touch anything. You shan't turn me out." And she twined her arms about him. She clung to him. "I'm going to stay. I'm going to stay."

Cabot shrank with a movement of repulsion. This woman was strange. Strange and terrible. This was not his Daverdana, his delicate, exquisite Daverdana.

"If you stay," said Eriksen, "there's work and pain—and love and exaltation. It's hard—— But it's life."

"If you go, if you come with me," whispered Cabot, "there is beauty and grace, peace and content, soft music and soft living."

"Leave me, Miles," said Daverdana. "I told you long ago it was the ideal you cared for. Keep it and go. I will get hard against the rocks and tough against the wind. Go back to the delicate flowers, the hothouse flowers. Leave me here."

He made a movement towards the descent. "You've brought me a long way for nothing, Daverdana. But at least I came when you called."

"I never called," she exclaimed, looking at Eriksen.

"But your message——"

"I sent it," interrupted Eriksen. "I wanted to be sure. I wanted Daverdana to be sure."

"Well——" Cabot shrugged, "stay then. Stay for your vulgar emotions and your vulgar lover. I'll leave the matter in the hands of your three aunts. Have you any message for them?"

Again Eriksen answered: "Yes. Tell them that Daverdana has chosen a husband."

"A husband—" Cabot was sneering—"by the common law."

"There's a priest in the nearest village, Miles, who is coming to us this afternoon. Marriage itself is a common law, like death, like birth . . ."

Cabot turned swiftly, and without a word disappeared between the brushes that concealed the trail.

FOR a while Daverdana and Nils stood watching the branches swaying from that brisk passage. The wind blew a strand of her hair softly across his face.

He moved, bending to lift one of her hands to his lips.

"I love your poor hurt hands, Daverdana," he said.

"I love you, Nils."

"I have no rose-water to bathe them, but there is a clear stream a little way off, in the wood."

He put his arm about her waist. Her head drooped on his shoulder. And so like children they walked happily, in a silence throbbing with wonder, out of the brilliant sunshine into the shade of the pine woods.

A Long Life and a Scrappy One

—continued from page 43

thousand or such mileage outa the ole bus.

"But ya can't git much speed outa the human beings ya find in the Slightly Used Department. When a arm or a leg or a eye has went it seems to be prattically gone forever. A-course ther's some o' them high-toned scientists says they can graft a arm or a leg or a eye onta a man an' make him good as new. The bunk. An' whatif they could? Suppose I gotta chorus goil's leg on me right side and a prohibition officer's eye on me left. I'd like ta know where that'd take me, if anywheres.

"THAT monkey gland joke is so old that even the monkeys don't laff at it no more. But I know a multy-millionaire livin' up on Frog's Neck what fell fer it a week ago. He bought a $15,000 trained chimp off a circus becuz he wanted sompn high grade, see? But the chimp was too smart fer 'im. First night he was up to that swell palace on the hill that there monk stole the old gent's dress suit, frisked a roll of grands, went out to the garaj and ordered the shoffer to drive 'im right over to Broadway.

"S'a fack. The old gent an' the monk looked so much alike the shofe din't know the diff. Only he thought the boss was developin' a awful lotta power alluva sudden."

"Gee wizza!" marvelled Mr. Gallupi. "Did dey catcha dat monk?"

"Nochet," declared Hen Dall. "When last heard of the chimp was singnin' the old man's name to checks all along the White Way. Lotta folks think it's the millionaire got young again. But the bootleggers knows different. Y'can't fool a bootlegger. They know a phoney article s'far 's they can see it. They oughta. They hanle nothin' else."

Mr. Gallupi sighed as he threw five children in the car with several others and got in after them.

"It mucha fine feel to be yong!" he murmured.

"Naw it ain't. Not when yer too old to enjoy it," said Hen Dall.

It was not until after the car had whizzed away he found the smallest of the Gallupis asleep under a pile of junk and wondered if Cosimo would remember to come back.

She Married a Yacht

—continued from page 61

wife, but she knew too—and from his own lips!—just how badly the poor man had been treated by the selfish, grasping, disagreeable women whose victim he had been. She had felt sorry for him, listening to his story, and eager to make up to him for all that he had suffered. She wanted to tell Ribera and Dixon that it was all the women's fault, and that Roy was not to blame!

She was troubled nevertheless by unacknowledged misgivings as she waited below for her husband. It was not till nearly eleven that he came back, with strange news.

His lawyer, an old friend, had handled Kaufman cleverly, giving him just drink enough to pull him out of the black rage he had fallen into on learning that he wasn't, after all, married to Kathleen nor yet licensed to love her as he would—and not enough to cloud his brain and make him reckless. There was a difficulty about the divorce, which had been supposed final; some evidence of collusion or malpractise introduced at the last moment to invalidate the decree. Somebody wanted to be bought off, most likely that darned jane herself, as though she hadn't had enough of his money! But now, whatever he paid, his fourth marriage was hung up for a certain definite period. He poured all this out to Kathleen, not caressing her or even sitting close to her, because the fear of the law was upon him.

"I'll take you right off—pity your mother's started West. I suppose we couldn't get hold of her now. I have a married sister you can go and stay with . . ."

"But Roy! Do we have to go *ashore?* Not make the cruise after all?"

She was all but tearfully disappointed, and Roy bit his moustache and considered.

"You're so keen on the trip?"

"Why, of *course* I am! I *did* want to go—more than anything in the world—I've never in my life spent more than one night at sea——"

"Well, see here. Say we go just the same—it won't be a honeymoon, but if I get some married woman for a chaperon, make up a little party——"

She was radiant. Roy dashed ashore again, to gather his guests on perhaps the shortest notice ever yet given to a yachting party. Kathleen and Mrs. Arnold would share the big cabin with the twin beds. Another girl and another man were secured, and there was a boisterous welcoming supper, with much sympathy for Roy and the pressing on him and on Kathleen of liquid consolation.

She, so suddenly Miss Randall again, didn't require consolation. She cared only about making the cruise, and was relieved rather than otherwise that all these people were coming along. A little denied panic in her, roused by Ribera's half-understood words, was quieted now that Roy, from the urgent, troublesome person he had for half an hour turned into, was transformed back into her good-natured fiancé. She realized with a certain surprise she could breathe freely again.

KATHLEEN walked the wet decks next day, looking out over a gray foam-streaked sea, for the *Kestrel* ran into rough weather almost at once after passing Sandy Hook. She had the deck to herself. All the others, including Roy, were prostrate with sea-sickness, and since she scarcely knew them, and there were stewards and stewardesses, men and maids enough to tend the sufferers, she could please herself by watching out the gale on deck.

She had rather meant not to speak to Ribera, but there was nobody else to speak to, and he was there, speaking to her at first peremptorily to order her below. Her feeling of offense was so mingled with curiosity that she wasn't able to keep to her resolve of icily ignoring him, and it was with some heat that she made good her claim to stay above hatches, to stand beside him and even at certain times to take the wheel. He saw soon enough that she might be trusted there, and his respect for her mounted oddly. They talked, of course, but only of the things of the sea, of perilous passages and wrecks, of storms and buried treasures, and of the sea books that both knew and loved. Nothing was said of the postponed marriage, nor of Roy Kaufman, sick and frustrated in his cabin.

Three days is a long time, in nature's reckoning, when two people are drawn together by a tremendously strong common interest; when one is under twenty and the other under twenty-five; when each is superbly beautiful and healthy; when one is fair-skinned and blue-eyed and the other has Latin blood in his veins. Barty Ribera, whose mother and whose upbringing were American, had the verve in love of his Portuguese ancestry, from whom also he had that skill with ships that had fitted him for a yacht's captaincy. It was only a stop-gap, he explained to Kathleen.

"They kicked me out of the navy after the war, and good billets are mighty few just now. I hate the position—serving the whims of a rich man. But what can a fellow do? Besides, I lost my heart to the ship herself. Wouldn't it be great to own her! She's fit to go around the Horn right now."

"What would you do with her if she were yours?"

"I'd take her straight away from these waters, to begin with. I'd trade in her, here, there and everywhere, one venture after another—there's always a good living in it, if you're free to pick your cargo and lay your course to suit yourself."

Kathleen was surprised to find herself wishing the *Kestrel* was his, and that he and she were sailing in it without their landlubber fellow-passengers. Why, that was disloyal to Roy! And the next moment Ribera spoke her thought, his eyes bold on her face.

"Just you and I—" he murmured.

Kathleen didn't say anything. She kept her lids down, and forgot that she was practically his owner's wife, and that

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she ought to rebuke him. He wanted what she wanted . . . The knowledge made her unreasonably glad, and presently she raised her eyes and his met them with a long intense look under which she crimsoned and looked away again.

The brilliant color in her fair face seemed to him the loveliest thing he had ever seen. And a sudden doubt shook him, whether a girl who could blush like that could be the shameless little mercenary he had thought her. Put it that his guess were true, that she had no idea what she was letting herself in for . . . His feelings underwent a swift transformation in their very essence. They became protective, chivalrous and tender; briefly, in that moment, he fell in love.

You don't kiss, even if you are quite alone with the person you need to kiss, while the wind is shouting past your ears, trying to pull your hair from your head, and the wheel's spokes in your hand are fighting like a live thing. You wait for that till some one else has the wheel, and passing into the shelter of the after-lounge you find that it is empty. Ribera swung her to him then. Her mouth was almost as high as his.

"You can't marry Kaufman," he released her to declare positively.

Kathleen was as far as possible from understanding her own feelings. She was a little frightened by them, and not quite so sure as she had been a few moments earlier that she would like to sail alone with Ribera, if that satisfying comrade were likely to do upsetting things like this. Nor had it occurred to her that any choice still remained to her in the matter of marrying Roy. She stammered:

"Why, it's all arranged! It's the merest accident we're not married now!"

"It's an accident that almost makes me believe in God!" he said, taking long deep breaths. "You are going to marry me, Kathleen, of course! We're made for each other. We'll go all over the world in our schooner—when I've saved enough to buy it—and not to the beautiful savage places only, but to civilized cities, cities you don't know exist. We'll have weeks on shore at a time, when we can go to opera, and eat in gay cafés, and dance, and drive along the fashionable promenades and do your shopping. There are ports all along the coast of South America like that. When we're at sea our life will be a dream of love, and if there are storms you have courage enough to meet them, and I will bring you safe through any danger——"

"But the *Kestrel*——"

Her thoughts swung to the yacht, actually beneath her feet, the beautiful vessel which was hers while she was Roy's, and whose possession she had ecstatically believed meant happiness. Besides, she had gone so far, and Roy had been so good to her, and she had no money . . . She felt giddy, too, and bewildered; there was a hot new sweetness at her heart, and Ribera's kiss still throbbed on her lips.

"Oh!—Let me go!" she muttered.

Because there was at the moment a step on the companionway, he unwillingly obeyed.

Once safe in her cabin, Kathleen hardened her heart. As if, for any one or anything, she could give up her *Kestrel!* She decided to avoid being alone with Ribera, and to this end wrote him a cold little note in which she begged him not to speak to her again as he had done, and informed him that she had no intention of breaking her engagement to Mr. Kaufman. It was easy to find an opportunity to give it to him, but it was not so easy to meet his burning eyes after he had eagerly torn it open. She had to think very hard then of her beautiful yacht.

That night, luckily for her resolve, the *Kestrel* ran out of the rough weather, and when morning broke it could be seen that some one had ironed out the wrinkled gray water till it lay satin smooth, while some one else had painted it an improbable blue. The yachting party emerged from below, plaintive and hungry, but gaining spirit enough by afternoon for auction, and even a little dancing.

It was Roy now who manoeuvered Kathleen into solitary corners, and his kisses were every one a potent argument in favor of his rival . . .

MEN like Kaufman do not cruise in West Indian waters, even when the voyage as first planned is a honeymoon outing, without a secondary object. At Nassau they loaded the *Kestrel* to capacity with liquids, and also took aboard certain carefree acquaintances of Roy's, there encountered.

Mrs. Arnold looked uneasy, and took Kathleen aside to suggest that she should try to restrain her fiancé.

"Please don't think I mean to criticize Roy," she said, "or to interfere in your affairs, but I've known him for a long time, and the truth is he doesn't know when to stop drinking. I can't keep him in order, but perhaps you can. And I don't like this crowd he's taking on board, they're not the kind of people you need to know!"

Kathleen failed miserably in her attempt to do what Mrs. Arnold couldn't. She offered some blunt advice with an utter lack of tact, and was told in effect to mind her own business. The disastrous party was in full swing almost immediately after that. Nearly everybody got a little drunk, and Roy got drunkest of all and the most quickly so.

He had bought, while on shore, as a curiosity, a knife of the kind that is called a *machete*, the inseparable tool and weapon of the West Indian. It was long and hideously sharp, and Roy found it amusing to threaten the bare arms of the women playfully with its point, provoking shrieks of real or pretended terror. He got no fun out of Kathleen, however; when the *machete's* edge grazed her wrist her eyes met his so disdainfully that he dropped the knife and cut his own fingers in picking it up.

She was disgusted, frightened and angry, but she scarcely knew how to get away from people who seemed to think themselves her guests. She sat on in moody silence until Roy, almost weeping at the pathos of the exclusion, realized that his sailing-master had not had a cocktail . . . Such cruel neglect had to be atoned for at once, and managing to get to his feet he possessed himself of the tray, and staggered aft to where Ribera stood at the wheel.

Kathleen followed, because it gave her the excuse she had been longing for to get out of the dining-saloon.

"Thanks, I drink only wine," Barty declined curtly.

"No, no, ol' man—have a cocktail!" Roy begged. "Take all you want—take two! I muzz insizz!"

"Look here, Mr. Kaufman!" said Ribera impatiently. "The course we are on takes steering; there are dangerous reefs about here. I couldn't drink now if I wanted to, and I don't want to. Would you mind not talking to me for a bit?"

With the incalculable swiftness of the very drunk, Roy passed from hospitable geniality to fury. His answer to the captain's not too diplomatic refusal was a truculent shout.

"Who d'you think you are! Who you think you're talking to! I'm the owner zis boat! I order you, drink two cocktails!"

"You may be fifty times the owner. I command here, I'm the captain! Go away!"

Certainly Ribera would have used more tact with a drunken man, would not have let his own temper rise so swiftly, but for the antagonism he felt for Roy in claiming Kathleen. Kaufman spoke slowly now, a little steadied by his anger.

"You *were* captain—you're not any longer. You're fired! Here, I'll take the wheel myself."

He lurched forward. Ribera motioned Kathleen to the wheel, with the aside, "As she is—" and stepped in front of it. He meant to trip Kaufman, a matter of seconds, have him carried below and locked into his cabin where he could do no harm. His own concern was the safety of the *Kestrel*.

But Kaufman, frightened by the sudden threatening advance, whipped out the *machete* he had been playing with a few minutes earlier, and Ribera, closing with him incautiously, took it to the hilt in his thigh. They pitched to the deck together, and it was Roy who crawled from under and rose on all fours, partly sobered.

Kathleen left the wheel to run and crouch by Barty, to lift his head to her knee and feel with shaking hands for the handle of the *machete*. For nothing less than his extremity could she have so forgotten her seaman's training as to loose her fingers from those spokes. But she saw only the anguish on his face. Horror gripped her and panic, and with them the sudden overmastering conviction that nothing and nobody mattered to her in the whole world except this man.

The *Kestrel* didn't matter, nor the tricky course that the *Kestrel* should have ploughed, through the tiderips and treacherous currents in these shoal waters, of which she knew well enough. The ringing in her ears drowned out the crash of the wave that sucked and broke over the wicked ledge towards which the yacht danced as her spokes spun unguided.

It was Roy who uttered a hoarse shout too late and lurched towards the wheel. The crash came before he reached it, a thick sound like sudden thunder that sent a brutal shock through all the yacht's fine frame. Then her stern lifting and pounding, lifting and pounding as the wave behind sucked back and swelled again to break.

Through the ugly panic of the next ten minutes Kathleen stayed by Barty, fending off from him with her strong young shoulders the trampling mob that broke up from below, screaming in earnest now, and most of them too drunk for any attempt at a decent bearing.

But the crew was sober and well drilled. There were boats enough and the night was calm. The salvaging of the passengers was carried through efficiently by the men under the orders of the mate. They put Barty Ribera into the second boat, and Kathleen stayed for it. Roy, with the other women of the party, had tumbled into the first.

RIBERA came back to consciousness again in a hotel room in Nassau. He was weak from bleeding and stiff with bandages, but he frowningly remembered some part of what had passed. Presently he turned his head with painful effort, and there sat Kathleen quite as he would have had her, and often did have her, in dreams.

"Then I'm not awake after all," he muttered.

But she came and looked down at him with a shy solicitude that somehow convinced him of her reality. For if he had been dreaming he would have dreamed her arms around him and her lips offered to him—since there is no sense of self-denial in dreams.

Her hand, though, hung near enough for him to reach, and he saw that she was no longer wearing Kaufman's blatant diamond.

"Kathleen! That means you've turned that little rotter down after all?"

"I'm not going to marry Roy—no—" she said, but so woefully that he asked, startled: "Was anybody hurt but me?"

"The *Kestrel* was hurt! Smashed on a reef, and left to pound herself to pieces."

He hadn't known, of course, and he took the news as the tragedy it was. Then:

"The *Kestrel* stood between us," he said slowly.

"Yes. I didn't see how I could give her up, ever. It was the yacht I meant to marry always—never Roy! But when you went down I left the wheel to go to you. Was that—symbolic, do you think, maybe?"

He was sure of it, but he answered her with another question.

"Won't Kaufman buy you another yacht?"

"He can't talk about anything else but the splendors of the *Kestrel II*. But I think, the next time I get married—that is, if I ever really do marry—I think I'll marry——"

"Go on!" he ordered imperiously as she checked herself, reddening.

And because the way he was looking at her gave her the same thrill of delight that came with sailing when the wind screamed and gunwales were awash; and because she didn't believe in hauling down canvas for stress of weather, she ended in a little daring rush—

"I think next time I'll marry a man!"

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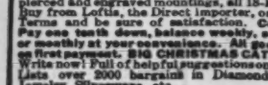

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Peacock Feathers

—continued from page 73

Street again, he stood a moment on the sidewalk in deep thought. "I suppose a wholesale millinery store will be the best place," he finally decided and walked across the street to a corner tobacco shop. After consulting the telephone directory, he hailed a taxi and gave the driver a number on 33rd Street.

The manager of the millinery store proved to be a Mr. Eisenbaum, a short fat man with a little beak of a nose and heavy red jowls. He accepted Clive's introduction with suave courtesy and invited him into his office.

"I cannot imagine," he said after offering Clive a cigar and directing him to a comfortably upholstered chair, "what a detective can want from a wholesale milliner. Hats, I daresay, have caused many crimes, but those hats are made in Paris and bought on the Avenue."

"It isn't a hat this time," Clive replied, smiling pleasantly at the little man. "It's peacock feathers. Do you happen to carry them?"

"We may have a few in stock, but I doubt it. They went out a number of years ago, and they'll probably never come back in again. Women are too superstitious. Of course, the Chinese stores always have a lot of them on hand."

Clive took the card with the feather pasted on it out of his pocket. "I don't suppose there is anything about this feather that distinguishes it from any other?" he asked.

Mr. Eisenbaum reached for the card, examined the feather for a minute and then looked up. "As it happens, there is," he answered slowly, "and what's more, I am almost positive that I know exactly where that feather came from."

"Really!" exclaimed Clive, astonished. "I had hoped for no such luck as that. I got your address out of the telephone directory's classified list. I thought you might direct me to an importer who could tell me who carried these feathers."

"Well, an importer might have been able to tell you, but if this had been an ordinary feather—one that had been bought at a Chinese shop, for example—he would have been completely at sea. But this isn't an ordinary feather." Mr. Eisenbaum leaned back and folded his little fat hands on his round little stomach.

"This feather, you will notice," he continued, pointing to the card, which Clive had taken from him, "has an unusually blue eye, very iridescent, and the bronze comes close to being orange. Years ago, a friend of mine imported them from India. He called them, if I remember rightly, the Rajah. In those days he was a successful wholesale feather merchant, but feathers went out of fashion and he decided finally to open a large millinery store in the Bronx. He couldn't sell his feathers, and so he took them with him, hoping, of course, to use them up gradually on hats. I'll wager anything that that feather came from Heitman's on Fordham Road."

"Well, this *is* luck," Clive cried in delight, "rare luck! The party I suspect lives only a few blocks from Fordham Road. Now, if you'll give me Mr. Heitman's address, I won't take any more of your time. You've been mighty kind and helpful, and you've saved me a world of time and trouble."

HALF an hour's ride in the subway brought Clive to Fordham Road and Heitman's Millinery Shop, a large garish store, cluttered with cheap hats and rather shabbily dressed women hunting for a bargain.

"Yes," said Mr. Heitman after Clive had introduced himself and asked if he carried the Rajah peacock feather in stock, "yes, I carry it. At least, I used to. I don't know whether there are any left, though. I haven't bought any for ten years, you see. Come in the rear of the store and I'll ask the clerk at the feather counter. She'll know."

The clerk at the feather counter was a girl about eighteen years old, with hair that was fluffy and untidy, cheeks rouged an unhealthy purple, and lips painted a poisonous scarlet. When Heitman asked her if she had any Rajah peacock feathers left, she leaned confidentially against the counter and replied:

"Well, I'll tell yuh, Mr. Heitman. I've jes' got two. I seen them in the box jes' yesterday. I was goin' to t'row the box away, Mr. Heitman, when I notices them two feathers. You can soich me how they happens to be jes' two lef', but that's all there is. I guess I didn't take them all outta the box when I sells the res' of them. I don't know. That musta been it. Funny, ain't it, how you'll miss 'em like that?"

"Do you remember selling the others?" asked Clive.

The girl leaned further forward. "I sure do. A dame comes in here about t'ree weeks ago and asks for peacock feathers. I remember it 'cause it was 'most five o'clock and my boy friend was waitin' for me outside, and I t'ought she was goin' to take all night. She didn't, though. She was in a big hurry, kinda excited, y'know. Well, I showed her the Rajahs and she fell for them on the spot, and they was marked down cheap and she took the lot. I musta missed them two, bein' in a kinda hurry."

"I see," Clive said. "And what did the woman look like?"

She leaned back and laughed shrilly. "Soich me!" she cried. "Say, I'd be a reg'lar dip if I could remember all the dames that comes to me counter. An' remember 'em t'ree weeks! T'ree weeks! Say, I'd forget me mother in t'ree weeks if I didn't see her every mornin'."

"I suppose so," Clive agreed with a smile. "Well, I'd like those two feathers, anyway. How much are they?"

"Oh, just take them," Heitman exclaimed. "They're worth practically nothing and they're taking up valuable space."

VERY much pleased with himself, Clive returned to Manhattan, ate lunch, and then went to his office. From there he telephoned to Commissioner Schill.

"That you, Barney?" he asked.

"Yes, Clive," came the eager answer.

"Well, make a note to be in my office next Thursday at three-thirty."

"What for?" Schill demanded.

"To meet the sender of the peacock feathers."

"What! You don't mean to say that you've located him already?"

"Well, I think I have, Barney. I may be wrong, but if I am, I'll know in a day or two and let you know. But I'll bet I'm right, and I'll bet"—he paused, hesitated for a word and then chose one that revealed nothing—"I'll bet the bird comes to my office next Thursday at three-thirty. Will you be here?"

"I wouldn't miss it for anything," Schill assured him. Count on me."

The following Thursday he walked into Clive's office a few minutes early and demanded particulars. Clive refused them, explaining that he had no intention of spoiling the drama for a reader of detective stories. "I'll give you the explanation," he said, "after the confession."

An instant later his secretary knocked on the door and said: "A lady to see you, Mr. Frasier."

"Show her in."

The lady proved to be on the pleasant side of thirty, with a pale face, rather irregular features, and very intense black eyes. Her black cloak looked as if it had served several winters, and Clive decided after one glance that she undoubtedly bought her hats from Heitman.

"How do you do," he said, rising. "It is Mrs. Maynard, isn't it?"

"Yes," she replied. "I am Mrs. Maynard? What do you want?" Her manner was defiant and a little frightened.

Clive was all courtesy and gentleness. "I think you must know, Mrs. Maynard," he replied, "but it is nothing for you to worry about. I would like you to meet my friend, Mr. Barnes."

Schill did not blink an eye at the sudden change of his name, and he bowed politely in response to Mrs. Maynard's almost inaudible: "I am glad to meet you."

She sat down in the chair Clive indicated and waited quietly, though her hands were clasped too tightly in her lap for complete composure.

"Now," began Clive, seating himself at his desk, "please tell us, Mrs. Maynard, why you sent the barbs of the peacock feather to Mr. Morton. That's really all we want to know."

"My husband told me that you saw him at the office," she replied. "You must know."

"Your husband doesn't know, does he?"

"Oh no!" she cried excitedly. "And you mustn't tell him. Please! He would laugh at me."

"Please don't be nervous, Mrs. Maynard," Clive said gently. "I assure you that I am not going to tell your husband. I *think* I know, but I want to hear the whole story from you."

She looked unhappily at her lap for a moment and then raised her eyes in new defiance. "I'll tell you everything," she cried. "I don't care just as long as my husband doesn't find out." Again she looked down, and her voice was softer when she began her story. "My husband told me he had told you about taking the money from the Company and how Mr. Morton gave him six months to pay it back. We saved and saved, but we couldn't save a thousand dollars in six months. We didn't know anybody who had a thousand dollars they could let us have, and then—a month ago—I thought of a friend of mine who had been married three years ago and left New York. She married a man with lots of money, and I knew she'd help us if she could. I knew they were travelling, and I wasn't sure where they were. The last I had heard from her she was in Honolulu. I told Gus—my husband—I'd write to Nora and for him to ask Mr. Morton for more time. Mr. Morton said no. I knew Nora would send the money if she got my letter, but I didn't know when she'd get it, and a month was such a short time. Somehow I had to get Mr. Morton to give Gus a few more days. Then I thought of the peacock feather.

She paused, no longer excited but obviously embarrassed. Clive helped her by asking casually: "You got the feather at Heitman's, didn't you?"

"Yes. It was the nearest place."

"But why did you send the feather? And why did you send just five or six barbs at a time? Why didn't you send the whole feather?"

"Because it wouldn't have done any good to send a whole feather," she replied, answering his last question first "I sent the feather because Mr. Morton was superstitious. I knew that he thought the eye of a peacock feather was bad luck and that he wouldn't start anything new on a day when he saw the eye of a peacock feather; so I planned to send him a few barbs at a time and make him think that something terrible was going to happen. He'd given Gus until the 18th to pay the money, and so I was going to get the last barb to him on the 18th. That was Thursday. I knew he wouldn't do anything he could avoid on Friday, and sometimes he didn't come down to the office on Saturday; so if I could get him to postpone it, I thought, he'd probably give Gus until Monday and maybe more time. It would be four days anyhow."

"I see, I see," Clive said in mild agreement. "And why did you send the cards from different postal stations?"

"Because I was afraid Mr. Morton would engage a detective. I always handled the cards with gloves, and I wrote February 18 on them with my left hand."

"And then you heard from your friend?" prompted Clive, Mrs. Maynard having paused as if she were going to say no more.

"YES, we got a telegram from San Francisco. She sent a night letter and said that my letter had just reached them—forwarded from Honolulu. She said that she had sent the money, and I was wild because she hadn't telegraphed it. Gus and I figured that it wouldn't get here before Saturday, and we didn't know what to do. I just couldn't ask Nora to telegraph five hundred when she'd already sent a check. Then Wednesday morning Gus asked Mr. Morton for a few days more, but he said no. I 'phoned to Gus in the afternoon, and he told me what Mr. Morton had said."

"Then you thought of more peacock feathers?" Clive's voice was casual.

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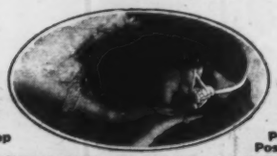

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"Yes. I got panicky, you see. It suddenly dawned on me that Mr. Morton probably hadn't kept the barbs I had sent at all—that he'd probably just thrown them away as they came. I thought about it all afternoon, and then I hurried down to Heitman's. The girl pulled out a box of feathers. They didn't cost much, and I took all she had. That night—it was a week ago Wednesday—Gus went out about seven-thirty to see if he couldn't borrow the money. I knew that he'd be gone all evening. As soon as he'd left, I took the feathers and got a train for Pelham."

She was talking rapidly, too lost in her narrative to be frightened, too eager for the solace of confession to care what might come of it.

"I didn't know just what I was going to do when I got there," she continued, "but I went into the garden and sneaked around the side of the house. The library was lighted and I could see Mr. Morton sitting at his desk with something in his hand. It was a card with a peacock feather pasted on it. I knew then that my plan had worked. After a while he got up and opened the French doors. I hid behind a bush and watched him walk up and down on the porch. It was cold, though, and he stayed outside only a minute or two. When he went inside, he didn't lock the doors. He looked at the card again, and then put it back in the desk. He was awfully nervous; I could see that. After a little while he left the library. It was nearly ten o'clock then, and I was shivering with cold.

I sneaked up on the porch and into the library. I'd hardly got inside when I heard somebody coming. I was almost scared to death and hid under the desk. It was just the butler. He locked the doors and put out the lights. Then he went into the next room. I stayed where I was, and in a little while I heard him and Mr. Morton go up stairs talking."

"Then you scattered the feathers around the library?" questioned Clive.

"Yes. I put them everywhere. I had to be careful because the room was dark. When I was through, I put the paper they were wrapped in in my bag and left. I closed the French doors and the latch clicked. Then I hurried back to the station. It began snowing before I got there. It was nearly midnight by the time I got home, and I was afraid Gus would be back. I was in bed, though, when he came home, and he doesn't know anything about it. You remember you promised not to tell him."

"I won't," Clive assured her again. "Mr. Maynard told me that the check came Thursday morning."

"Oh, it did!" she cried. "Nora had sent it by air mail. We'd never once thought of that. And then Mr. Morton killed himself." The sparkle in her eyes was suddenly drowned with tears. "He'd been so good to us," she whispered. "He did everything for Betty."

For the first time Clive looked surprised. "You and your husband thought a great deal of Mr. Morton, didn't you?" he asked gently.

"Oh, we loved him," she cried, drying her tears with her handkerchief. "He was wonderful, the kindest man that ever lived. He paid for Betty's operation and did everything in the world for her. And we wanted him to know that Gus paid the money back." More tears came, and she bowed her head in grief so genuine that neither Clive nor Schill doubted it for an instant.

The two men looked at each other. Schill asked a question with his eyes, and as Clive nodded permission, spoke quietly to the weeping woman. "Mrs. Maynard," he began, "I have a little confession to make. When Mr. Frasier told you that my name was Barnes, he lied so as not to frighten you. I'm really Barney Schill, the Commissioner of Police."

Startled, Mrs. Maynard looked up.

"Don't be alarmed," he went on before she could speak. "Everything is quite all right. We thought that there might be something criminal behind those peacock feathers. We see now that there wasn't. I assure you, Mrs. Maynard, that I believe your story absolutely, and that you need have no fear. You will not be molested in any way."

For a moment, she stared at him and then she applied her handkerchief diligently and frankly to her eyes and nose.

"May I go now?" she asked, rising weakly. "I'm tired."

"Of course, you may," Schill replied. "You have been very honest with us, and we ask no more."

At the door she paused and turned to the two men. "I feel better for telling," she admitted with a wan smile. "Good-bye."

When the door closed, Clive exclaimed: "I missed it on one point. I never dreamed she wouldn't know that she had killed him. She's as innocent as her little girl."

"Yes," agreed Schill. "There's no doubt of that. The coroner's report, 'cause unknown,' will stand as it is. But, tell me, Clive, how did you get her here?"

CLIVE grinned. "I sent her cards with a dozen barbs of a peacock feather on each card, and at the bottom of each card I wrote my address and 'Thursday, February 24th at three-thirty.' I figured that if I'd got hold of the wrong person, I'd hear from her at once, but that if she were the right person, she'd be too frightened not to obey orders."

"But why didn't you just call on her and accuse her?" Schill demanded. "Apparently you were pretty sure who it was."

"I was—but I didn't have a shred of actual evidence. You see, I had to startle the confession out of her."

"Well, what made you think of repeating her stunt?"

"Barney, you're thick today," Clive said laughing. "Why, she's as superstitious as Morton. Otherwise, she'd never have placed such faith in her plan. You see, she couldn't conceive of Morton flying in the face of those peacock feathers because she'd never dare fly in the face of them herself."

"Oh, I see. But how did you figure it out in the first place?"

"Well, Barney," began Clive, "you see I had a hunch . . ."

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When I arrived at the Kaufmann & Fabry Studio my hair was straight, as you may see in the picture at the left. I had very little faith in any of the so-called hair-wavers and expected I would have to visit my hairdresser before keeping my other posing appointments in the afternoon. To my delight, as you will see from the center photograph, it was not necessary. My hair was perfectly waved. I proved that Maison Marcellers will save time and money.

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